

Disability SA

Information Sheet

Parkinson's disease: equipment to assist with daily living

Parkinson's disease is a progressive degenerative disorder of the brain affecting the coordination of movement. Symptoms include tremor, stiffness, slowness of movement and instability, which affect the ability to perform everyday activities independently.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists can teach strategies to assist with movement and tasks, and can demonstrate equipment to help the person to be more independent. Since everyone's experience with Parkinson's is unique individual need for equipment will vary.



Eating and Drinking

If eating or drinking takes time, insulated bowls, plates and mugs will keep food warm. Plates with a raised edge help prevent food from slipping over the sides, and non-slip mats stabilise plates and bowls.

Mugs with two handles make grasping easier, and cups with sufficient nose clearance allow drinking without tipping the head back. If spillage is an issue, there are cups with a straw or spout. Straws with a one-way valve are available.

Cutlery with built-up handles aid grasp. Use foam handles over existing cutlery, or purchase new cutlery with varied handle designs. Angled cutlery curves food towards the mouth, reducing the need to lift the elbow out from the body, and spoons with deep bowls help keep food on the spoon if hand tremor is an issue. Swivel forks or spoons maintain a level position as food is transferred to the mouth.

Weighted cutlery and weighted cups increase stability against tremor, however, they may increase fatigue.

For difficulties with swallowing, chewing, drinking, language, memory, word finding, speech or voice, it is advisable to have an assessment by a speech pathologist. This includes assessing the suitability of voice amplifiers which boost the wearer's vocal volume.

Food Preparation

A range of manual, electric and battery operated jar and can openers are available. Ring-pull can openers ease the removal of ring pull can lids. Kettle tippers assist with pouring boiling water without lifting or carrying the kettle, and kitchen trolleys with handbrakes can be used to transport items if the person is unsteady. Vegetable peelers and preparation knives with built-up handles or angled blades eliminate strain on smaller joints.

The Red Tulip: On 11 April 2005, the Red Tulip was launched as the Worldwide Symbol of Parkinson's Disease at the 9th World PD Day Conference in Luxembourg. Source: European Parkinson's Disease Association. Accessed 15/12/08 at: <http://www.epda.eu.com/worldPDDay/theRedTulip.asp>

Bathroom

Use a shower chair/stool and/or install grab rails in the shower alcove. If the shower is over the bath, a bath board provides a seat. Use a handheld shower hose and a long-handled bath sponge. Place soap in a bath mitt or bag on a rope to prevent it from falling to the floor. A towel on a chair or a terry towelling robe assists with drying after showering. For additional support, replace towel rails with grab rails.

Toilet

Fixed and portable aids that raise the height of toilet seats are available. Handrails or a toilet seat aid with armrests improve safety and ease of getting on/off the toilet. Bedside commodes eliminate the need to walk to the toilet during the night, or non-spill urinals and bedpans can be placed nearby to avoid having to get out of bed.



Dressing

- ▶ Sit in a chair with armrests for support and increased balance. If standing, rest a hand on a dressing table or lean against furniture or a wall for additional support. Where possible, dress the most affected side first and undress it last.
- ▶ Clothes that fasten at the front or have hook-and-loop fastenings (velcro™) are easier to manage, as is clothing with elastic waistbands or made from stretch fabric. Front-opening bras or bras that pull over the head or up from the feet may be easier.
- ▶ Leather-soled shoes provide less friction than rubber, making it easier to walk. Shoes should have low heels and good arch support. Use shoelaces that do not require tying, such as coil laces, and long-handled shoe horns to remove shoes.
- ▶ Sock/stocking aids are useful if reaching down is difficult. A dressing stick can be used to put on/remove coats, shirts and trousers.
- ▶ Button hooks have a large handle to grasp and assist with buttons, while zips with small rings attached make it easier to grasp the zip.

Seating

A chair with a straight back, armrests and firm seat set to the correct height makes standing easier. Seats can be raised by using blocks under each leg or placing the chair on a platform. Chairs with height-adjustable legs are also available.

Bedroom

To assist with turning over in bed, bend the knees, turn the head in the direction of travel and reach across with the opposite arm. Other options include a firm mattress, a board under the mattress, satin nightwear, satin sheets or a sheet with satin from shoulder to knee and cotton at the ends. For sitting up in bed, use a bed pole, which goes under the mattress or secures to the side of a metal-based bed. To eliminate the risk of entrapment, ensure the bed pole is secure, with no gap between the mattress and the pole. Electric beds have an adjustable backrest, or inflatable cushions can be used to raise the head of the bed.

General Household Aids

To reduce the risk of falls, long-handled cleaning equipment can be used while sitting. Pick-up reachers assist in picking up small light objects from the floor or a shelf, reducing bending, reaching and the risk of over-balancing. Spring-assisted scissors are easier to operate, while touch lamps are easier to use than light switches. Replace door and tap handles with levers, or use temporary aids to provide more leverage.

Reading and Writing

Bookstands can be used when sitting at a table, in a lounge chair or reading in bed. Manual or automated page turners assist in turning pages, and "talking books" are available, which read a story aloud.

To "warm up" the hands, try drawing large loops. Pens with larger grips give more control, and using larger print instead of cursive makes writing more legible. Lined paper helps to maintain the size and neatness of writing, and securing the paper with a clipboard will keep it stable. Use a typewriter or computer if handwriting is illegible. A key guard on a keyboard assists with pressing the correct key.

Telephones

Big buttons assist if experiencing hand tremor, and an answering machine eliminates the need to rush to the phone. Keep a seat by the phone to sit on so that the focus is on one thing at a time. Speaker phones enable the user to speak and listen without having to hold the receiver, and some phones include features that amplify the voice.

Recreation

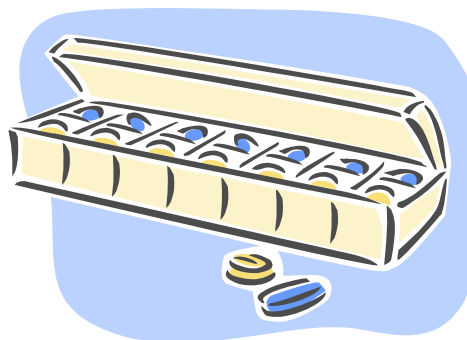
To assist with balance and safety, use long-handled gardening tools to reduce the need to bend down. Garden stools and kneeling pads with armrests make standing easier, and ratchet pruners require less effort. For lawn or indoor bowls, use a bowling arm to pick up and bowl, and a bowl and kitty pick-up will reduce bending. Look for games with larger pieces or lighter parts, and cardholders assist with holding playing cards.

Alarm Systems

Intercom systems and person-to-person alarms assist in contacting others within the home. Telephone-based emergency call systems call for assistance to an outside person. Further information can be obtained from the Independent Living Centre or the information sheet "Telephone-based emergency call systems".

Medication Management

A range of medicine organisers are available, including those with reminder alarms. Watches are available with alarms to remind when to take medication and to record medical history. Pill cutters or tablet crushers make it easier to ensure the correct dosage.



Contenance Aids and Equipment

Telephone enquiries and appointments can be made with the Registered Nurse at the Contenance Resource Centre (collocated at the Independent Living Centre). For advice on bowel and bladder problems see your doctor or a continence nurse adviser, or ring the National Contenance Helpline on 1800 330 066.

Mobility Aids

Mobility aids such as walking frames, manual and powered wheelchairs and scooters assist with balance and conserving energy. It is advisable to have an assessment by a health professional to ascertain whether a mobility aid is appropriate and which type is most suitable.

Falls Prevention and Energy Conservation

For information about falls prevention, contact the Independent Living Centre. For energy conservation techniques, ask for the information sheet: "Energy Conservation".

For further information or to make an appointment to view equipment, please contact the Independent Living Centre. The Independent Living Centre provides free advice on equipment and techniques to help you with everyday tasks.

Independent Living Centre

11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086

Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only)
or (08) 8266 5260

Fax: (08) 8266 5263

Email: ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au

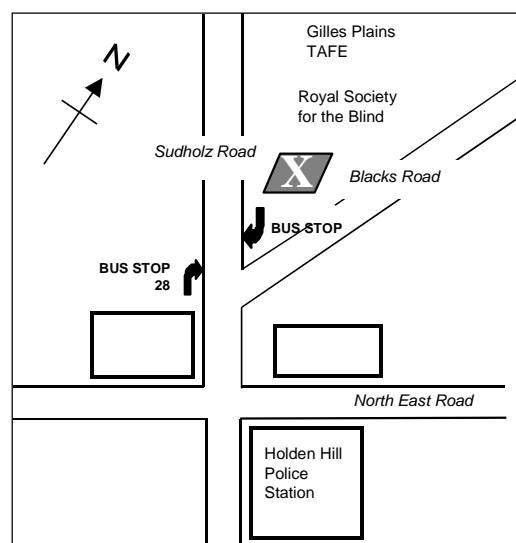
Website: www.disability.sa.gov.au

Bus routes:

From the city T500/T501 or
207/208 to Stop 28 Sudholz Road

Timetable information: (08) 8210 1000

Accessible off-street parking is available.



Parkinson's SA Inc

Parkinson's SA Inc provides support services for people with Parkinson's disease and their families/carers.

Contact:

PO Box 466, Unley SA 5061

Phone: 8357 8909

Email: info@parkinsonssa.org.au

Web: <http://parkinsonssa.wordpress.com>