

Chair exercise for Parkinson's patients

One of the main benefits of exercise for people with PD is symptom management. Body functions most affected by Parkinson's are posture, grip strength, flexibility, walking, balance, motor coordination, stiffness and tremors. Key yoga inspired exercises can help with each of these. All of these exercises can be done while seated in a sturdy chair, preferably one without arms.

- **Posture** – Sit on chair, with feet flat on floor just below knees. Make sure shoulders are above hips and back feels straight. Feel as though your spine is stretched a bit and is erect. After sitting this way for a moment, raise both arms over your head and hold them up with elbows straight for about 10 seconds, repeat 3 times, making sure you are inhaling as arms go up and exhaling as the arms come down.
- **Grip strength** – Shake your hands, wiggle your fingers, pull on each of your fingers, open and close your hands, stretching your fingers as far apart as possible when hands are in open position. Finally, make a tight fist and hold it tightly for about 5 seconds, then repeat 3 times.
- **Flexibility** – (1) Extend arms out to the side as far as you can with hands in open position, and repeat 3 times, breathing in as your arms go out and breathing out as your arms come back in. (2) Then extend arms up over your head as far as you can 3 times, inhaling as arms go up and exhaling as arms come down. (3) Reach left arm up and out from right shoulder (like throwing a cross body punch up), and hold arm in extended position for a few seconds. Repeat 5 times. (4) Do the same with the other arm. (5) Extend your right foot out in front of you onto the heel. Reach up with the right arm. While leaning forward try to touch your right hand to your extended right foot. Repeat twice then (6) do the same with your left side. (7) Reach out and bring fingers to shoulders, with elbows sticking out, then lift elbows high and repeat 3 times. (8) Give yourself a hug and lean to left side and sway yourself to the right side. Repeat 2 times then sway the other way.

- **Walking** – Aerobic moves. Chair jumping jacks. (Arms and legs extend out to the sides at the same time.) Do 3 sets of 5. Rest, then repeat 3 sets.
- **Balance** – Improve core strength. Lean back in chair with hands on opposite shoulders, then lean up 3 times (using your abdominal muscles). Rest and do again. Lift legs while leaning back 3 times. Rest and do again.
- **Motor coordination** – Exercises that involve body AND mind. Think of a series of moves, for example, clap your hands, tap your hands to your shoulders, tap your knees, lean forward, lean back and clap your hands again. Do the series in the same order three times. You can make up any series of movements involving arms, legs, head, neck, and feel free to include leans, and twists. Always try to repeat in the same order.
- **Stiffness** – Shake arms and legs, hands and feet. Lean and swing arms. Swing legs. Rub (massage) body parts that feel tense or tight. Move and stretch areas that feel like they need some movement.
- **Tremors** – Since these are made worse with stress, use this simple relaxation technique. Sit comfortably, close your eyes and mentally picture a place where you feel safe and relaxed, breathe slowly but fully, count each breath backwards from five to one. Then continue to breathe a bit more deeply than you normally do. Keep your eyes closed throughout and when a bothersome thought comes to mind, focus your mind on your breath, counting each inhale and exhale until the thought passes. If your mind must be active, allow it to think happy thoughts only. Try to remain in this position for 3 to 5 minutes.

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