



Gain power over Parkinson's with an empowering **self-management toolkit**

Power is the key to maintaining independence and good quality of life. A proactive approach with a tailored plan and tools to empower you on the journey is critical.



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The 'KEES' toolkit was developed to simplify the key areas and information on the journey to empowerment and self-management of Parkinson's Disease (PD).

Knowledge: What is PD?

Parkinson's Disease is a progressive neurological disorder. The second most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's Disease. Parkinson's affects an estimated 15,000 people in Ireland. It is the loss of a neurochemical called dopamine. As we age, we lose dopamine; but for those with Parkinson's, it is lost at a faster rate.

It is primarily a movement disorder. However, there are 40 potential motor and non-motor symptoms associated with it. It affects slightly more men than women, with most people diagnosed after the age of 60 and one in ten under 50.

As stated by Bas Bloem: "Seven million people, seven million variants of Parkinson's. In everyone, the disease manifests itself differently."¹

Education: Optimise symptom control

There is currently no cure for Parkinson's, but medication can provide symptom control. With medication, it's important to ask: What is the medication? What is it expected to help? How long before you see improvement? What's the best way to take it? Also, keep a diary.

Three crucial aspects to optimise medication are (1) consistent timing, (2) avoiding constipation and (3) hydration.

Medication alongside relaxation and distraction techniques are key to symptom management. What works for one person may not work for the next, hence a personalised approach and plan.

Exercise: Prescribe exercise for all

Exercise is essential in the management of motor and non-motor symptoms. The physical benefits of exercise include addressing balance, gait, rigidity/stiffness and strength.

Psychological benefits include building confidence and improving serotonin production, sleep, mood and wellbeing.

Varied exercises adapted to your level of suitability will help. Don't forget to enjoy it, so you're more likely to continue rather than avoid it. Some exercises found to be beneficial include Tai Chi, dance, yoga and aqua therapy.

Support: Recognise and reach out

Ready to recognise the need for support? Reach out and get involved! It can be daunting but is an essential

component of the toolkit.

This network can come from peer support and the wider circle of health professionals. Parkinson's Association of Ireland provides a nationwide branch network, in-person and zoom classes and opportunities to participate in ongoing research.

References

1. Bastiaan R. Bloem, Michael S. Okun, Christine Klein. Parkinson's disease. The Lancet. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(21)00218-X

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