



Parkinson's: Tips for Preventing Falls & Maximizing Balance

Falls can occur at different times for those with Parkinson's, but mostly happen with a freezing episode – meaning, the inability for the feet or other parts of the body to move. According to Parkinsons.org, 38% of those with PD fall each year and those individuals can have a longer time to rehab or be hospitalized.

Tips for Preventing Falls around the Home

- **Floors:** Repair torn/worn carpeting and linoleum. Make sure rugs are secured to floor. Remove throw rugs – if you must keep them, make sure they are double sided taped down or have nonslip rug pads. Keep furniture in its accustomed place. Replace shag carpeting with low pile carpeting. Clear floors and get rid of clutter.
- **Bathroom:** Install grab bars and nonskid mats in/next to the tub, shower and toilet. Use non-skid mats on floors – or, install wall-to-wall carpeting. Add a shower seat and a hand held shower head with hose. A heightened toilet seat can be very helpful.
- **Kitchen:** Install nonskid rubber mats around sink and stove. Clean up spills immediately. Move frequently used items to a place within easy reach.
- **Stairs:** Ensure rugs and rails are secure, and add a rail on both sides of the stairs for improved support. Steps need to be slip resistant. Add secure carpet runners to hardwood floors.
- **Lighting:** Ensure halls, stairways, and entrances are well lit. Improve lighting with light sensitive nightlights or motion detectors that turn on automatically. Make sure lamps are close and within the reach of the bed.
- **Other:** Keep bedding tucked inside mattress. Rearrange furniture to allow clear path so keep plants, clutter and cords (wii, laptop, cell or smart phone, PlayStation, etc) free from walkways. Paint outside steps with non-slip coating and add rails.

Tips for Maximizing Balance

- Keep one hand free at all times –use a backpack or fanny pack to transport things.
- Consciously lift your feet off of the ground when walking. Avoid wearing rubber bottom footwear, as they can “catch” on the carpet/floor and cause tripping.
- Use a “U” technique when turning around and move slowly when changing positions.
- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart to give a sturdier stance.
- Do one thing at a time – avoid multi-tasking. Take your time and do not hurry.... Count to 15 between movements to assist in focusing.
- Fully swing both arms while walking -- this requires intentionality and will help you to maintain balance and posture.
- If a freezing episode comes on, visualize stepping over an imaginary object. Do not have your companion pull you as this can throw your balance off more.

This article is written by Network LIFELINE, the largest Medical Alert Device program in Western PA. This program delivers extraordinary service to nine counties and offers the cutting-edge **Auto Alert** -- which automatically detects falls, provides peace of mind and assists people with living independently longer. Contact Bob Gordon at 412-779-0696 or Toll Free 866-677-7795.