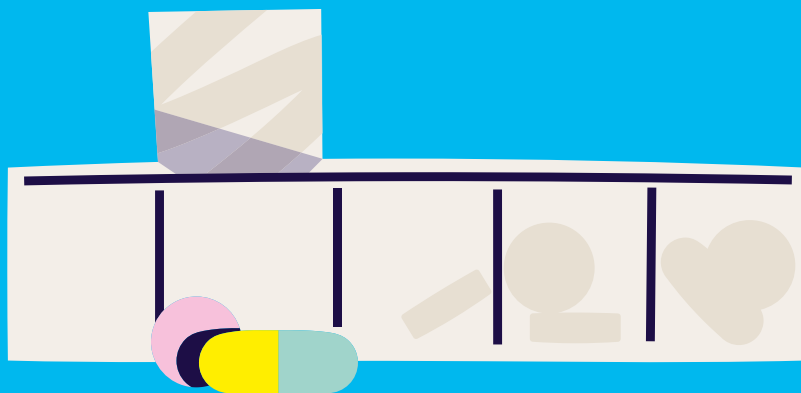


Daily living equipment for people with Parkinson's

Everyday life

Find out more about equipment
that can help make everyday
life easier for you



If you have Parkinson's, you may find it more difficult to carry out everyday tasks. There is a variety of equipment that is available to help you to continue with tasks and activities more easily.

This booklet looks at what is available, and how it may help you with everyday tasks. It also includes details of how to get the equipment and an overview of the funding options available.

A note for family and carers

Parkinson's affects everyone differently and what suits one person may not suit another. Equipment can also be expensive and is not always the answer to a person's needs.

Always get advice from an occupational therapist if you think a piece of equipment may be helpful. A physiotherapist, speech and language therapist or Parkinson's nurse may also be able to recommend something based on your needs.

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Choosing equipment and adaptations

In this section:

- Getting advice
- Trying before you buy
- Help with funding
- VAT

Getting advice

Always get advice from an occupational therapist before you buy equipment. A physiotherapist, speech and language therapist or Parkinson's nurse may also be able to recommend something based on your needs.

An occupational therapist can make recommendations based on your own requirements. These may involve exercises, adapting the way you do something, or other kinds of treatment.

If an occupational therapist thinks you could benefit from using a piece of equipment, they may be able to provide or arrange changes to your home (such as hand and grab rails in a bathroom) or suggest where to find suitable items. The Disabled Living Foundation can also give you independent information and advice on choosing equipment.

Finding an occupational therapist

You can usually contact an occupational therapist through your GP, your social services or social work department, or health and social care partnership. They may be able to arrange for an occupational therapist to visit you at home.

You can also ask your GP, specialist or Parkinson's nurse to try to refer you to a rehabilitation unit if you need to see other professionals too, such as a physiotherapist or speech and language therapist.

You can also pay for private occupational therapy. To find a private occupational therapist in your area, you can contact the Royal College of Occupational Therapists.

See the 'More information and support' section for their contact details.

Find out more: see our information on occupational therapy and Parkinson's.



Trying before you buy

If you decide to buy a piece of equipment it's best to try it out first. There may be different models available that you want to compare.

You may have an equipment demonstration centre near you that you can visit by appointment. For details of your nearest centre, ask at your GP surgery or visit Living Made Easy (livingmadeeasy.org.uk/contacts_edc.php).

The Disabled Living Foundation also has an online tool, AskSARA, to help you identify suitable equipment and suppliers and compare products. Visit <https://asksara.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/selector> for more information.

In Northern Ireland and Scotland, you can visit a Disabled Living Centre (assist-uk.org).

Some local British Red Cross groups loan out equipment such as wheelchairs. See the 'More information and support' section for their contact details.

Help with funding

Occupational therapists can give you advice and may be able to help arrange funding for minor home adaptations, such as fitting grab rails and handrails by stairs.

You can also get advice on more expensive home adaptations, such as stair lifts or accessible showers, from occupational therapists based in local social services or health and social care services.

If you need major changes to your home, such as an extension, fixed hoists, stair lifts or downstairs bathrooms and shower units, you may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant. If this grant is available, an occupational therapist will assess your needs and will contact the relevant council departments.

In Scotland, you may be entitled to a Private Sector Housing Grant if you own your own home or rent privately. This entitles you to at least 80% of the approved expense of the work. If you receive a qualifying benefit, you will receive 100% of the cost. If you live in housing association accommodation, you can get up to 100% of your expenses funded. You will not have to contribute to any costs if you live in local authority housing.

Funding for major home adaptations is often means tested. So the decision as to whether you get money from the government or local authority to help pay for something you need depends on how much money you have, including your savings.

To find out more about funding for major adaptations:

- In England, visit [GOV.UK/disabled-facilities-grants](https://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants)
- In Northern Ireland, visit nidirect.gov.uk/articles/disabled-facilities-grants
- In Scotland, visit mygov.scot/care-equipmentadaptations
- In Wales, visit gov.wales/housing-adaptations

VAT

If you're disabled or have a long-term condition, you shouldn't be charged VAT on products designed or adapted for your own personal or domestic use. This includes stair lifts, adjustable beds, wheelchairs, alarms and building work, like installing ramps.

You also shouldn't be charged VAT on installation, repairs, maintenance or spare parts for equipment.

Depending on your needs, you can apply for VAT exemption by:

- asking your supplier for a VAT relief form
- applying online when purchasing VAT-free items online
- downloading a form to take into a shop when you make a qualifying purchase

Visit **GOV.UK** and search for 'VAT relief'. You can also call HM Revenue and Customs on **0300 200 3700** for more information.

Getting around

In this section:

- Grab rails and handrails
- Walking sticks
- Walking frames
- Manual wheelchairs

Grab rails and handrails

These can help you move around the house more independently. Extra stair and wall railings can give you more support and guidance in areas of your house where it's easier to fall, such as staircases, corners or entryways.

Grab rails are available in a variety of sizes, textures and direction. It's important to think about what you want the rail to help you with as that can help decide which type of rail you need. For example, horizontal rails in a bedroom can help with getting dressed or getting in and out of bed.

Vertical handrails from floor to ceiling may be useful for getting in and out of the bath, or beside a toilet where lack of space means other rails won't fit.

Getting handrails installed

Speak to an occupational therapist or local council office. They may arrange an assessment from health or social services to see where hand and grab rails would fit in your home.

Self-assessment is available in some areas. Your local Age UK office may also be able to assess your home and install rails at a small cost. Contact details for these organisations can be found in the 'More information and support' section.

If you live in a housing association property, you should contact your landlord.

Walking sticks

Walking sticks are commonly used to improve balance and give extra support. A walking stick can also be a helpful way to signal to others around you that you need extra room or time to move around.

Some people with Parkinson's find this reduces anxiety caused by people crowding them, which could lead to freezing.

Types of walking stick

Wooden sticks – these have a set height and usually a curved handle.

Metal sticks – these can be extendable (height-adjustable), folding, collapsible, and three or four-footed. They can have moulded or curved handles.

Elbow crutches – some people find using two elbow crutches gives more support than a pair of traditional walking sticks, but crutches may not suit everyone.

Walking sticks with folding seats – these are larger and heavier than most other walking sticks, so may not be appropriate for everyday use. They might be useful for shopping or in social situations where you want to take lots of breaks.

LaserCane – these are designed to help people with Parkinson’s who experience freezing. The LaserCane projects a red laser beam onto the ground in front of your feet when walking. This cues you to step over the light when your feet freeze.

Some people find a LaserCane very effective, but it can be difficult to see the laser beam in bright environments, such as outdoors on a sunny day.

Nordic poles – these thinner, longer, lightweight poles are used for Nordic walking. In this style of walking, the specially designed poles help you move forwards. They often have replaceable tips to suit different surfaces, such as pavements or soft ground.

For more information about Nordic walking, contact British Nordic Walking (**britishnordicwalking.org.uk**) or Nordic Walking UK (**nordicwalking.co.uk**)

Choosing your walking stick

When choosing or adjusting your stick, wear your usual footwear. If you stand with good upright posture the handle should line up with the bump at the bottom of your wrist bone, with your arm hanging naturally at your side. This will mean that your elbow bends slightly when you hold the handle.

If you don’t have much upper body strength, choose a stick that is light and easy to move forward in time with your stride. You may find the heavier three- or four-footed sticks are more difficult to move forward and may trip you up. Choose a handle that is a shape and size that lets you grip it as strongly as you can. Walking sticks are tested to a maximum weight, so check that yours is appropriate before buying.

Buying a walking stick

You might be able to borrow or be given a stick free of charge through the NHS, either from a physiotherapist, a Parkinson’s clinic or your GP surgery.

You’ll have a much wider choice at most mobility shops and larger pharmacies. Here you can try different styles to find which is most comfortable and offers you the right level of support.

It’s a good idea to look online at the prices of different walking sticks to compare with those you can buy in shops. Websites such as Amazon or eBay will list many sellers and brands of walking sticks. Charity shops may also have walking sticks. If you are buying second-hand equipment check it’s not damaged or unsafe in any way.

You may find it helpful to have two or three walking sticks, so that one can be kept on each level of your house and another for outdoor use. Walking sticks should be regularly checked for wear and tear. If the tip of the stick (the ferrule) becomes worn, it must be replaced. Your local physiotherapy department can do this for you.

Walking frames

A walking frame or walker is a supportive frame used while walking. It can give you a higher level of support than walking sticks or rails, and can help you keep your balance, preventing falls.

A walking frame may help you keep your balance when getting up from a sitting position or when preparing to sit down. Using a walking frame can also increase your ability to get around on your own. Many people find a walking frame helpful for short outings such as shopping.

Types of walking frame

Non-wheeled walking frames – these may have an adjustable height. They are usually made from a lightweight metal alloy, but make sure the walking frame is light enough for you to lift and move forward easily.

Collapsible or folding walking frames – these are easy to store either at home or in the car when travelling.

Wheeled walking frames – these may have two, three or four wheels, made from different materials:

- **Hard plastic wheels** – these are light, but don't have any give, so can be hard on the joints on uneven outdoor surfaces and noisy on pavements.
- **Rubber wheels** – these can be heavy, but work well outdoors.
- **Pneumatic wheels** – these are good for walking trails or cross country, but can be heavy and more expensive.

Other features – wheeled walking frames often have a fixed or folding seat, which may be useful to rest on during walks. But sometimes people find the seat gets in the way or adds too much weight to the frame, making it difficult to push or move around.

Some walking frames have baskets under the seat or on the handle bars, which can be helpful for carrying things.

Choosing your walking frame

Before buying a walking frame, think about where you will want to use it. For example, will it fit through doorways when you're at home?

Four-wheeled walking frames tend to offer more support than three-wheeled ones because they are wider and are usually made of heavier materials. This makes them particularly good for taller or heavier people, and also people who tend to fall over more often or who experience involuntary movements (dyskinesia) or tremor. But heavier frames may be more difficult to use, and to lift in and out of cars.

Sometimes a walking frame may 'get away' from the person using it and cause them to fall. There are different types of brakes available. Make sure they are easy for you to use, as some can be difficult if you experience rigidity or weakness in your hands.

Make sure your walking frame is at the right height for you. The Disabled Living Foundation guidelines say that the hand grips should be at wrist height when the elbow is slightly bent.

Buying a walking frame

If possible, try lots of different styles to see which allows you to walk most naturally.

It may be possible to borrow or be given a walking frame through the NHS, either from a physiotherapist, a Parkinson's clinic or your GP surgery. Mobility shops and larger pharmacies will stock a range of walking frames that you can try to find out which is most comfortable and provides you with the right level of support.

You may find it useful to have two or even three walking frames so that one can be kept on each level of your house, and possibly another stored in your car boot for use away from home.



Manual wheelchairs

Some people with Parkinson's don't want to use a wheelchair all the time, but have one at home for if they are having a bad day or in their car for when they go on longer outings.

Some people also find wheelchairs a good way of exercising because they can push it and sit in it when they get tired. Manual wheelchairs may be moved by the person sitting in the chair (self-propelled) or pushed by someone else (attendant-propelled). In both cases, the person moving the wheelchair will need a fair level of strength and fitness.

Types of wheelchair

Collapsible wheelchairs – often wheelchairs are collapsible, with removable wheels. This can help you store the wheelchair more easily at home and in your car. It's also possible to get a folding backrest with handles that fold down.

Detachable chairs – these have seats that detach from their base so you can slide the seat onto a base in the car. This means that there is no need for the person sitting to transfer between seats.

These are usually quite expensive and heavy, so they require some strength to move between the seat bases. They also require a hoist operated by another person to move the base into the boot of the car.

Power packs – many people attach a power pack to the bottom of their manual wheelchair, which means that less force is needed to push the chair.

This can be a good option for longer outings, but because it can be difficult to attach, it may not be useful for very short journeys. Power packs for manual wheelchairs don't fit all wheelchairs.

The pack is also attached quite low to the ground, so it can get caught on steep ramps and other surfaces.

Comfort and safety tips:

- Always apply the brakes when the wheelchair is not moving.
- Adjust the footplates to the correct height so you can sit comfortably and move them out of the way when you are getting in or out of the chair.
- A cushion can be used in a wheelchair to prevent excess pressure if you feel uncomfortable after sitting for over half an hour.

Choosing your wheelchair

Look for a wheelchair that:

- is not too heavy to lift, and collapses easily if you or someone else will be putting it in the car regularly
- has handles at a height that means the person pushing the wheelchair doesn't have to stoop down to reach them
- has large enough wheels to go over kerbs easily
- has anti-tipping features. A lap strap can be helpful, especially when going over kerbs or single steps. A chest harness may also be helpful if you slide out of a chair, or a one-way glide sheet that is designed to limit how easy it is to slide forward

- has sturdy footplates. If you experience dystonia or severe dyskinesia, the muscular strength can force the footplate into the wrong angle in cheaper chairs. Plastic footplates can break more easily, or can interfere with the freedom of the front wheels, especially for turns and reversing if they are pushed down

Buying a wheelchair

Ask your GP or local hospital if they have wheelchair services. You may also qualify for credit towards the cost of a wheelchair if you want to buy one yourself. If you are eligible for a wheelchair in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, you will be provided with one.

Wheelchairs are often available to hire or buy from charities such as the British Red Cross (see the 'More information and support' section). You can also borrow different wheelchairs from mobility centres so you can try it before buying one.

Shopmobility schemes allow you to hire an electric wheelchair in large shopping areas.

Personal care

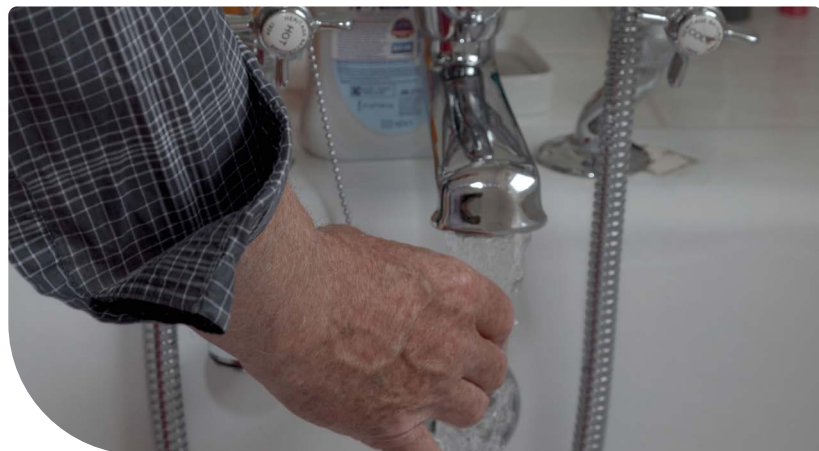
In this section:

- Bathing and showering
- Using the toilet

Bathing and showering

Grab rails are helpful in bathrooms and toilets because they can help give you stability and confidence. You can find out more in the 'Getting around' section in this information.

It is also a good idea to apply a slip resistant material to the bottom and edges of the bath or shower, as well as to railings. Shower heads on a hose are useful as then you can get the water exactly where it's needed.



Bath and shower seats

Bath and shower seats can help you get in and out of the bath with less risk of falling. Some people find these seats help to reduce problems with their balance when standing in the shower.

There are two main types of bath seat. One sits across the top of the bath, as a seat or a simple board, which may be removed or attached to the wall on a hinge. The second type can be lowered into the bath manually or electrically.

If you have a shower cubicle, you can use a free-standing stool or mount a 'flip-down' seat on the wall. There are many styles available and the one that is best for you will depend on the type of shower or bath unit you have, and your own preferences.

Converting a bath to a shower or wet room

Some people convert their baths to shower units or wet rooms. In some cases, it may be easier to convert a small bedroom or large storage area into a shower room instead of replacing a bath. If you find it hard to climb stairs, it may be an option to add a bathroom to the ground floor of your home.

Some people with Parkinson's find that a shower with a suitable seat and grab rails makes washing much easier, especially if the shower floor is level with the bathroom floor.

Any major building work in the home can be expensive. It may be possible to get some funding to pay for your conversion, but it's important to talk to an occupational therapist about whether changing your bathroom is right for you.

They can also advise you about financial support you may be able to apply for. You can also speak to your local council, social services or Parkinson's local adviser about grants.

Using the toilet

Raised toilet seats

A raised toilet seat can help you get up more easily from a seated position on the toilet and can help you maintain your independence.

When choosing a raised toilet seat, the seat should be large enough for you to sit comfortably and avoid leakage. Your feet should remain firmly on the floor. Make sure the seat isn't too high for other people in the house and that it can be safely removed and replaced. It is also possible to install a raised toilet.

Toilet grab rails

A grab rail can help you get on and off the toilet. It can also help with balance problems while standing and using the toilet. There are different grab rails to choose from, including free-standing rails and hinged drop-down rails that fix to the wall behind the toilet.

Toilet grab rails are usually supplied by social services or social work department. The type of rail that is best for you will depend on whether a fixed rail will fit the area around your toilet, if it will be at the appropriate height and whether you will need to adjust the rail at all.

Other equipment

A hand-held urinal may be useful if you need to go to the toilet urgently, but can't get out of a bed or chair quickly enough. Some people use a commode, which means they don't have to walk far at night if they need the toilet urgently or often.

You can also buy discreet disposable pads to place in your underwear to help manage incontinence. Some men with urinary incontinence prefer to use a sheath. These fit over the penis and collect urine in a leg bag.

Items like these are often available from specialist continence nurses or services, district nurses or with a GP prescription.

Find out more: see our information on managing bladder and bowel problems in Parkinson's.

Getting in and out of bed

In this section:

- Satin sheets
- Bedside grab rails
- Bed raisers
- Mattress raiser
- Electric profiling or hospital beds
- Hoists
- Over-bed trapezes and rope ladders

Satin sheets

Satin sheets can help you to turn over in bed. You can buy specially designed sheets with satin panels or off-the-shelf satin sheets. Some people prefer to have a panel of satin going across the middle of the bed where their hips would rest.

If you use satin sheets or panels, make sure there is an area of friction either at the end or sides of the bed, so you can get some grip.

Wearing satin pyjamas may also help, but you should avoid using satin sheets and satin pyjamas at the same time. Together, they can increase the risk of sliding out of bed too quickly.



Bedside grab rails

You can use these rails to adjust your position in bed, to help yourself out of bed and to lower yourself into bed independently.

You will need moderate upper body strength to be able to use bedside grab rails. An occupational therapist or physiotherapist will be able to show you the easiest ways to use them.

Bed raisers

Bed raisers are used to lift the whole bed a few inches, making it easier to get in and out of it. It's important the bed is not raised up too high as it might make it difficult for you to lift your legs onto the bed or get out of bed safely.

Bed raisers come in various heights, usually between three and six inches, and different materials such as wood, plastic and metal, to match the existing bed legs.

Any bed raisers you have should be stable and well supported. Also make sure that the legs of your bed sit deep within the bed raisers and don't just rest on top of them where they may slip off.

Mattress raiser

A mattress raiser can help lift you up into a seated position, making it easier for you to get out of bed.

There are different types of mattress raiser:

Mechanical – these can be set to a certain degree of elevation but can't be repositioned easily.

Electric – these allow you to raise and lower the bed using a handheld control.

Pneumatic – these use air to inflate a pillow-like device under the mattress to raise and lower it. This can also be set to inflate only on one side, turning you at the same time.

Choosing your mattress raiser

Raisers are more effective if the mattress is fairly thin. Thicker mattresses are difficult to bend and can scrunch up in the middle, which can be uncomfortable and make it more difficult to get out of bed.

Check that the controls are simple to use – single button controls might be easier. Also check how noisy a mattress raiser is.

Comfort and safety tips:

- Make sure electric cords, feeding lines or bedding won't get caught when the raiser is in motion.

- If your bed has a bedside rail or bed lever, it should be positioned so that it goes up and down with the mattress.
- Be aware that in the raised position, a mattress raiser can cause you to slide down and out of the bed.

Electric profiling or hospital beds

An electric profiling or hospital bed can be used to help you sit up from lying down. Some people find it reduces dizziness and ankle swelling.

Hospital beds are usually height-adjustable and may have side rails. They may have casters or wheels, which allow the bed to be moved. Electric profiling beds tend to look more like an ordinary bed. Both types of bed usually allow you to raise and lower the mattress at the head and knees.

If you have a partner and they want the bed in a different position, some styles of electric profiling beds split the mattress, so each person can adjust the mattress to the position they want.

Comfort and safety tips:

- Make sure there are no electric cords, feeding lines or bedding that will get caught up when the mattress is being raised.
- Take extra care if the bed has heavy sides that go up and down as it may be easy for your fingers and hands to get caught, especially if the rail comes down suddenly.
- Make sure the controls can be reached easily when you are lying down.

Hoists

A hoist can be used to lift you between your bed and wheelchair, or your bed and a commode. Usually social services will recommend or provide a hoist.

There are several different types available. You can talk to an occupational therapist about whether this equipment is suitable for you.

Over-bed trapezes and rope ladders

Bars (over-bed trapezes) and ropes can be hung over the bed above the head. These allow a person to pull themselves up from a lying to a sitting position.

You need a lot of upper body strength to use these devices so they don't suit most people with Parkinson's. An occupational therapist will be able to advise you about whether this piece of equipment is suitable for you.

Find out more: see our information on sleep and night-time problems in Parkinson's.

Communication

Some people with Parkinson's find that they have difficulties with communication, including their speech and writing. But technology can make this easier.

In this section:

- Computer (desktop or laptop)
- Smartphones and tablets
- Parkinson's UK apps and devices library

Computer (desktop or laptop)

Being able to use a computer and the internet can open up lots of opportunities for you. You can:

- handle day-to-day correspondence through email, video calling or using speech-to-text software, which can be useful if you have problems writing by hand
- keep in touch with your friends and family, and share experiences with other people affected by Parkinson's through online communities and social media

Smartphones and tablets

A smartphone is a mobile phone that can do many of the same things a computer does, such as access the internet and emails.

Tablets are very slim, lightweight computers. Many people with Parkinson's tell us that tablets, such as the Apple iPad, are easier to use than desktop or laptop computers because they have touchscreens, rather than a keyboard and mouse.

Smartphones and tablets come with apps, which are pieces of software that can be used to perform a variety of tasks you may find useful, including:

Voice activation – most smartphones and tablets either have built-in features to enable voice control, or you can install an app to do the same job.

You can use voice activation to help you:

- call someone in your phonebook just by saying their name
- search the internet
- dictate text messages and emails
- open apps
- record notes as reminders or to send as messages

Global Positioning System (GPS) trackers – these allow a nominated person, such as a partner, family member or carer, to see on a map where you are (as long as you are carrying your smartphone or tablet and are not in a signal black spot).

Video calling – lets you see and hear the person you are talking to during a call.

Medication managers – these apps remind you when your medication is due. They may also let you store medical information, for example care plans or details of local healthcare professionals.

Parkinson's UK apps and devices library

We've worked with Our Mobile Health and a panel of people living with Parkinson's to create a list of the best and most useful apps and devices on the market. Our Mobile Health are experts in identifying and reviewing trustworthy, relevant and engaging mobile health apps.

Everything in the library has been reviewed by people with Parkinson's. This means we only include apps and devices that our panel found genuinely useful, would recommend to other people with the condition and would continue to use after testing.

There are apps available to help with a variety of symptoms including sleep, mental health and wellbeing, and speech and communication.

Find out more: see our apps and devices library.

If you need help with communication, you should ask your GP or Parkinson's nurse to refer you to a speech and language therapist. You can also self-refer yourself to the local hospital trust or community therapy team.

A speech and language therapist can assess you to see if you would benefit from an electronic communication aid, a communication app on a smartphone or tablet, or a low tech paper communication aid such as a book or board.

Find out more: see our information on speech and language therapy, and speech and communication problems in Parkinson's.

Personal safety

If you experience falls, it may be useful to carry a personal alarm. Personal alarms can also help give family members peace of mind if they are concerned about someone when they are alone.

In this section:

- Types of alarm
- Buying a personal alarm or monitor

Types of alarm

Pendant alarms – these are worn around the neck or wrist. When activated they send a signal to either a unit in another part of the house, the phone of a nominated emergency contact or a call centre.

Monitors and intercoms – you can use these to alert another person in your house if you need them. Some monitors are triggered when you pass them – for example if you get out of bed in the middle of the night.

Wireless doorbells – available from any hardware shop, they can create a low-cost portable call system for your house and garden. This may be useful if your voice isn't strong enough to call for help from someone nearby.

Apps – some specialist apps for smartphones can act as an alarm trigger.

Community alarm systems – these connect to a call centre. They use two-way speakers in the house so that a call handler can ask if the person who triggered the alarm is OK. If there is no answer or the person reports that they need help, the call handler can arrange assistance from either an appointed contact, or from the emergency services. You can usually get help towards the cost of a community alarm system.

Buying a personal alarm or monitor

You may be able to get a personal alarm or monitor from your local council or from a charity, such as Age UK. If you think you would benefit from an alarm or monitor, speak to your GP or Parkinson's nurse.

Managing medication

In this section:

- Pill organisers with timers
- Blister pack pill ejectors
- Pill cutters

Pill organisers with timers

Pill organisers are used to arrange and store medication, which helps make sure that you are taking the right medication and dose at the right time.

Types of pill organisers

Pill organisers – these have separate compartments for several doses of medication per day. Larger organisers can cover a full week.

Dosette boxes – these organise medication by the time and week of the day. They can be empty boxes that you refill weekly or may come pre-filled by your pharmacist. Some people find having two dosette boxes allows for easy exchange and refills at the pharmacy.

Dosette-style blister packs are already organised into times and daily doses, according to your prescription.

Automatic pill dispensers – these allow you to set the organiser to ‘unlock’ one compartment at a time. This makes sure you are aware when a dose is due and makes it easy to take the right amount of medication.

Travel-size pill timers – these portable devices can hold a small number of medication doses (usually enough for a day) and have a small alarm to remind you when to take your medication. They can be useful to carry what you need when you are out and about.

Medication alerts – these will tell you when to take your medication through sounds, vibrations, flashing lights or a combination of these. Some advanced devices can send a text message to an emergency contact number if you don't take a dose within a specified timeframe.

Many people find that timers on mobile phones or digital watches are more useful than pill timers or pill organisers. Some people prefer vibrating timers, rather than beeping ones, because they draw less attention in public.



Choosing a pill organiser

If you have difficulty using your hands or problems with fine finger movements, you might prefer to choose a design that has larger buttons and compartments. Simpler pill organisers may also be better if you have difficulty with your memory and thinking.

Look for alarms that are easy to set and that reset automatically in preparation for the next dose. Many have 'pre-set' alarms that repeat daily, which may be helpful, depending on how regularly you take your medication.

Blister pack pill ejectors

A pill ejector is used to push a pill out of its packaging. It's a small plastic device that lets you apply more pressure to the packaging than you can with your hands.

Try not to break pills when using a blister pack pill ejector. It's also useful to make sure there are no stickers or labels on the back of the blister packs, which will make it more difficult to push the pills through.

Pill cutters

Pill cutters can be used to split pills into smaller sections, which make them easier to swallow. These are usually combined with a small plastic container that allows you to place a pill in a slot and cut it cleanly in two. The lid contains a razor sharp blade that comes down to cut the pill in half, so it's important to use the cutter correctly and safely.

Pill cutters work well and can be more precise than trying to snap pills in half, but there are things to be aware of:

- Controlled release or modified release tablets (e.g. Sinemet CR, Ropinirole XL, Pramipexole PR) should not be broken or cut as this will interfere with the controlled release mechanism.
- Madopar capsules should not be split – if splitting is needed, it would be better to have dispersible Madopar tablets.
- Entacapone or Stalevo can be split to help swallowing but the 'raw' edges can taste unpleasant.

Eating and drinking

In this section:

- Specially designed cutlery
- Food preparation knives
- Plate guards
- Insulated plates, bowls and cups
- Non-slip mats
- Slip and nosey cups
- Kettle tippers
- Boiling water dispensers or built-in taps

Specially designed cutlery

If you have reduced grip, weakness or tremor, it can be difficult to handle cutlery. Several specially designed styles are available, including:

- an all-in-one knife and fork or fork and spoon
- special handles that are extra large, easy-grip (moulded rubber), extra-light, weighted or curved
- foam sleeves, which can be placed over existing cutlery handles to make them easier to hold
- cutlery which can be bent to suit different grips
- self-levelling spoons

If you experience stiffness and rigidity, you may find that extra large or curved-handled cutlery works best for you. If you have a tremor you may prefer the combined fork and spoon, for example. You can usually buy specially designed cutlery in high street mobility shops.

Food preparation knives

If you have difficulty gripping things, a curved-handled or rocking action knife can be used for chopping food. The handle is D- or L-shaped to help give you more control. They come in various sizes and the handles are usually made from easy-grip material.

Plate guards

Plate guards clip onto the plate and provide an upright ring around it to stop food from falling off the edge. You can also push food up against the guard to get it onto your fork or spoon.

Insulated plates, bowls and cups

If it takes you longer to eat a meal or drink a drink, an insulated dish or mug can keep your food and drink hot or cold. They are often weighted, which can help keep the items stable.

Non-slip mats

These mats are made of a special tacky material and can be placed under plates or bowls to stop them moving around. This can be especially useful if you have limited mobility in one arm and find yourself chasing your plate across the table.

Non-slip mats can also be used on a tray to stop cups sliding during carrying, and between a mixing bowl and a work surface to stop the bowl moving.

Non-slip mats may be pre-cut in placemat styles, or you can buy the material by the metre and cut it to the size you need.

Slip and nosey cups

If you have a tremor, using a sip or sports cup with a lid can help stop liquids spilling. There are also cups with a rotatable handle that can help. Some people use a hydration system that connects a bottle of drink by a short narrow hose (usually used by cyclists) so sips can be taken with very little effort.

Nosey cups have a section cut out opposite where you drink from that allows the person drinking to tilt and drain the cup more easily.

These cups are made of plastic so are only suitable for cold drinks. There are also oval-shaped cups available that are designed to give sufficient nose clearance, and these are suitable for hot drinks.

A speech and language therapist can recommend what type of cup may work for you.

Kettle tippers

A kettle tipper lets you pour boiling water out of the kettle without lifting it up, which reduces the risk of spills and burns. Check your kettle will fit the tipper before buying one.

Boiling water dispensers or built-in taps

Water dispensers are used for dispensing boiling water without a kettle or saucepan. They allow you to fill a cup or mug with a pre-measured, cup-sized amount of boiling water. These are fairly easy to use, but must be filled manually and only supply small amounts of boiling liquid at a time.

Built-in hot water taps can be used for dispensing larger quantities of boiling water, without having to refill a dispenser. They can be expensive and need to be installed and connected to a water supply.

More information and support

AbilityNet

This organisation offers information to disabled people on how to use computers and the internet.

0800 048 7642

enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

www.abilitynet.org.uk

Age UK

Can provide advice on daily living equipment and home adaptations.

0800 055 6112

www.ageuk.org.uk

Age Cymru

08000 223 444

advice@agecymru.org.uk

www.ageuk.org.uk/cymrug

Age NI

0808 808 7575

advice@ageni.org

www.ageuk.org.uk/northernireland

Age Scotland

0800 12 44 222

info@agescotland.org.uk

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland

Attainability UK

Company that produces the LaserCane, to help with mobility problems.

01743 245 277

www.attainability.co.uk

British Red Cross

Can provide information about mobility aids available to loan in your area.

0344 871 11 11

www.redcross.org.uk

Citizens advice

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can offer help, advice and information on a whole range of subjects, including benefits, funding, allowances and much more.

03444 772 020

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Disability Action

The organisation works with people with different disabilities in Northern Ireland.

028 9029 7880

hq@disabilityaction.org

disabilityaction.org

Disabled living foundation

Provides information and advice on aids and equipment. They have a range of factsheets that you can download from their website.

0300 999 0004

www.dlf.org.uk

Motability

The Motability Scheme helps disabled people exchange their mobility allowance for a car, scooter or powered wheelchair.

0845 456 4566

www.motability.co.uk

Parkinson's UK online shop

We sell our own range of daily living aids on our online shop. You can also order a Daily Living Aids catalogue.

0844 415 7863

parkinsons.org.uk/shop

Royal College of Occupational Therapists

020 3141 4600

hello@rcot.co.uk

www.rcot.co.uk

Shopmobility

Shopmobility schemes, based at shopping centres throughout the UK, provide short-term hire of wheelchairs and scooters to help you get around the shops.

01933 229 644

www.nfsuk.org

Turn2us

The Turn2us Grants Search for information about sources of grant funding for people affected by Parkinson's.

www.turn2us.org.uk/Find-Benefits-Grants

Parkinson's nurses

Parkinson's nurses have specialist experience and knowledge of Parkinson's. They can:

- support people coming to terms with their Parkinson's diagnosis
- help people to manage their medication, so they get the best results and fewer side effects
- make referrals to other professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists

Some nurses are based in the community, such as your GP surgery. Others are based in hospital settings and clinics.

Talk to your GP or specialist for more details on speaking to a Parkinson's nurse.

Parkinson's UK information and support

Whatever your journey with Parkinson's, you're not alone.

From the moment you or someone you care about is diagnosed, we have information and support for you.

Speak to one of our friendly expert advisers, including specialist Parkinson's nurses, care advisers, and benefits and employment advisers. We've got information and advice on all aspects of living with Parkinson's.

Get help managing your diagnosis. Our information packs, webinars, courses and support groups can help you and your loved ones understand your Parkinson's diagnosis and better manage your symptoms.

Read our up to date, reliable health information. Our website, booklets and magazines can help you better understand Parkinson's. They're full of tips and advice on managing your condition and supporting a loved one.

Find ways to get active, stay active and live well with Parkinson's. Whatever your fitness level, we'll help you find the right activities for you.

Connect with other people with Parkinson's, families, friends and carers. Across the UK, in your local area or online. We'll help you meet others who understand what you're going through, because they're going through it too.

Find out more

- Call our helpline on **0808 800 0303** or email **hello@parkinsons.org.uk** to speak to an expert adviser.
- Visit **parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support** to read our information or find support that's local to you.
- Call **0330 124 3250** or visit **parkinsons.org.uk/order-print-booklets** to order free printed information.

Thank you

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to or reviewed this information.

Thanks also to our information review group and other people affected by Parkinson's who provided feedback.

All of our information is checked by experts and other people with Parkinson's, so you know it's information you can trust.

Feedback

If you have any comments or feedback about our information, please call **0800 138 6593**, email **feedback@parkinsons.org.uk**, or write to us at Parkinson's UK, 50 Broadway, London, SW1H 0BL.

If you'd like to find out more about how we put our information together or be part of the team that reviews our health content, please contact us at **healthcontent@parkinsons.org.uk** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/health-content**.

Can you help?

At Parkinson's UK, we are totally dependent on donations from individuals and organisations to fund the work that we do. There are many ways that you can help us to support people with Parkinson's.

If you would like to get involved, please contact our Supporter Care team on **0800 138 6593** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/donate**.

Thank you.

We're Parkinson's UK,
the charity that's
here to support every
Parkinson's journey.
Every step of the way.

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**
Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm,
Saturday 10am to 2pm (interpreting available)
Relay UK **18001 0808 800 0303** (for textphone users only)
hello@parkinsons.org.uk | parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's UK, 50 Broadway, London SW1H 0DB



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