

What is Parkinson's- for Employers

About Parkinson's



What you can do?



Parkinson's is a progressive and degenerative condition with no known cure.

No two people are the same

There are over 60 different symptoms – no one gets them all

About a third of people never get a tremor or shake

The most common symptoms I see is anxiety, apprehension, apathy, low mood or even depression.

Medication can only mask the symptoms, and its effects are variable and often unpredictable.

Every muscle in the body can be affected.

A softening of the voice, slurring or hoarseness is common, as are reduced gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language – all of these are 83% of how we communicate the other 17% are the words. So, it is easy for someone with Parkinson's to be misconstrued or misunderstood. Wordfinding and losing one's thread midsentence can also hamper communication as can the use of computers and mobiles due to tremor and reduced dexterity.

People with Parkinson's should be afforded more time to allow them to express themselves, it is their body not their mind that is affected.

One should not judge them or try to finish sentences on their behalf.

With Parkinson's, a person often must focus on one task to do it well, and this can be walking.

Do not expect someone with Parkinson's to multi task. Do not overload them with instructions in one sitting.

It is beneficial to appreciate that although you may see someone with less expression, taking smaller steps, with altered posture, quieter voice, shuffling, dragging feet etc. To the person with Parkinson's, it often feels as their actions are the same as they have always been.

The variability in mobility can vary dramatically in minutes, from one day to the next and everything in between. This can be normal fluctuations in the condition and effects of medication; but also, can be exacerbated greatly by

- Stress
- Hot/cold temperatures
- Infections (eg. a common cold which can come and go in a week, can affect symptoms for many weeks in someone with Parkinsons.)
- How long the person has had the condition (bear in mind that the onset of Parkinson's can be 5-20 years before any symptoms appear.)

Other Common symptoms to be aware of;

- Poor dexterity and co-ordination
- Pain
- Poor or no sense of smell
- Stiffness and rigidity of muscles and joints. There will be a need to both move around often and to rest often due to....
- Fatigue – A person must work and concentrate much harder to initiate actions. I have heard people describe having Parkinson's as "like walking through treacle"

When possible:

Be flexible. It is very beneficial for someone with Parkinson's to stay active, physically, mentally, and socially, and to feel they have purpose. They often give more to be seen as valuable and to make up for what they deem to be shortfalls in their performance. So, it is prudent to ensure that they are not burning themselves out – working unpaid hours, taking work home, etc. which can only cause more stress, fatigue and possibly increase sickness.

Wherever possible, speak to the person directly. They are the expert regarding their Parkinson's and will know what they need to perform at their best.

Make reasonable adjustments

Consider changing terms and conditions to minimise deadlines and productivity targets, and maybe look at remuneration for finished work and quality. *

*Parkinson's should not be used as a reason to lower salary's/hourly rates

Do speak to specialists in Parkinson's and/or Employment if you need to understand more.

Resources:

<https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment>

<https://www.face2faceparkinsons.co.uk/>

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/information-employers-about-parkinsons>

At Face2face Parkinson's C.I.C. We are keen to raise awareness and are often involved with educational events within the NHS, the general public, carers events etc. We are also happy to speak with employers and give informal talks to anyone wishing to understand more about the condition.

Kindest regards



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