

A diagnosis of Parkinson's disease (PD) can be overwhelming, so it's important to know that you are not alone in managing your PD. By empowering yourself with knowledge about PD, you can take control, manage your disease, and continue to do the things you enjoy as long as possible

### What is PD?

- » A neurodegenerative brain disorder that progresses slowly in most people
- » The average age of onset is approximately 60 years, but estimates suggest 15% of cases are diagnosed in people under the age of 40
- » In the United States, 50,000 to 60,000 new cases of PD are diagnosed each year; one million Americans currently have PD
- » Current treatments can help to control the symptoms of PD; however, there is no cure

### What is Neurodegeneration in PD?

- » Dopamine is a chemical produced in the brain which relays messages that control movements in the body
- » Motor symptoms of PD appear when approximately 60% to 80% of the dopamine-producing cells are damaged and do not produce enough dopamine
- » This process of impairment of brain cells is called neurodegeneration
- » Motor symptoms include tremor of the limbs, stiffness, slowness and/or problems with balance, muscle cramping, slowness and weakness of voice and impaired gait
- » Medication can help manage symptoms in the long and short term

### What Causes PD?

- » The cause of PD is still unknown
- » Many researchers believe that some combination of environmental and genetic factors contributes to the onset of PD

### What Can You Do?

- » Work with your family and health care team to create a game plan:
  - » Ask your physician for a referral to a neurologist or movement disorders specialist
  - » Discuss your status and priorities with your family and health care team
  - » Work together with your family, friends, and health care team for the benefit of your health and well-being
  - » Exercise to help maintain mobility
- » Seek information by visiting:
  - » [www.ParkinsonsHealth.com](http://www.ParkinsonsHealth.com)
  - » American Parkinson Disease Association, [www.apdaparkinson.org](http://www.apdaparkinson.org)
  - » The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, [www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)
  - » National Parkinson Foundation, [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org)
  - » The Parkinson Alliance, [www.parkinsonalliance.net](http://www.parkinsonalliance.net)
  - » Parkinson's Action Network, [www.parkinsonsaction.org](http://www.parkinsonsaction.org)
  - » Parkinson's Disease Foundation, [www.pdf.org](http://www.pdf.org)