



Family Members and Parkinson's Risk: *Three Things to Know*

If you have a family member with Parkinson's disease (PD), you know that PD impacts not only the person living with it but also their loved ones. At some point, many family members wonder if they could get Parkinson's or pass it to their children. Here are three things to know about Parkinson's risk if your family member lives or lived with PD.



THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION
FOR PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

01

Having a family member with Parkinson's increases disease risk.

If your parent, sibling or child has or had PD, you have a slightly increased risk of getting Parkinson's. But this does not guarantee you'll develop PD.

Even with a family history, the overall chance of Parkinson's is still somewhat low. Estimates of risk vary based on where and how studies are done and whether you have a Parkinson's gene change.

If you have a family member with PD, your risk of disease is generally about three percent, or three people out of 100. By comparison, the risk in the general population, for people without a family history of Parkinson's, is about one percent.

02

Parkinson's in the family doesn't necessarily mean Parkinson's in the genes.

Most people with Parkinson's do not have a relative with disease. But when Parkinson's does run in families, it could be because of shared environmental factors and/or genetics as well as individual aging. Families typically share living and sometimes also working spaces, which can include exposures that increase risk for PD, such as air pollution or pesticides.

Families also share genes. Genes are inherited bits of information that direct what we look like, whether we're at risk for disease, and other aspects of health. Some, but not all, families with Parkinson's have gene changes that increase risk. For those that do, parents can — but don't always — pass these to their children.

A single gene change explains Parkinson's in only about 10 percent of people. In most, multiple gene changes (some likely not yet discovered) along with environmental factors and aging cause disease.

03

Family members of people with Parkinson's can help prevent the disease.

Many family members are surprised and pleased to learn that they can play a role in Parkinson's research. For many, research is a way to show support for a loved one and to take action in your own health journey.

The Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI), which aims to learn more about Parkinson's to better treat and prevent disease, is enrolling parents, siblings and children of people with PD. People over age 60 are especially needed.

Join the study that could change everything.

➔ Read more about other Parkinson's risk factors such as aging, veteran status, acting out dreams while asleep and Ashkenazi Jewish descent in our **Better Brain Health guide**.

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