

Michael J. Fox: This is Michael J. Fox. Thanks for listening to this podcast. Learn more about The Michael J. Fox Foundation's work and how you can help speed a cure at michaeljfox.org.

Intro: Welcome to a recap of our latest Ask The MD video. Tune in as a movement disorder specialist at The Michael J. Fox Foundation answers your questions about Parkinson's research and care. Learn more about living well with Parkinson's disease. Free resources like this podcast are always available at michaeljfox.org.

Dr. Rachel Dolhun: I'm Dr. Rachel Dolhun, a movement disorder specialist, and Vice President of Medical Communications at The Michael J. Fox foundation for Parkinson's research. Today, I'm talking about what to do after a Parkinson's diagnosis. A diagnosis of Parkinson's can turn your world upside down. Many people say they aren't sure which way to turn or what to do next. In the first few days and weeks after a diagnosis, when the path forward may not be clear, six steps can help you define a road ahead.

First, see a Parkinson's specialist. If you haven't already done so, see a movement disorder specialist. This is a neurologist who has additional training in diagnosing and treating Parkinson's. Because these doctors have more experience with Parkinson's, they're best positioned to give you a second opinion on your diagnosis and care, develop an individualized treatment plan and update you on research. Movement disorder specialists can be hard to find in some areas, but try to see an expert at the start of your journey and at least once a year. You can ask your general neurologist, primary care doctor or other people with Parkinson's for recommendations.

Next, learn about Parkinson's. Knowing the facts about Parkinson's can help you understand the disease and make informed decisions about your care, but too much information can be overwhelming and even misleading. Ask your doctor and other people with Parkinson's for credible resources to help you learn more about the disease and your symptoms. Also, build a support system, know that you're not alone in Parkinson's and there are many places to turn for help. Support means different things to different people and it often changes throughout life with Parkinson's. A lot of people find support by talking with their spouse or a close family member or friend, and many also find it helpful to connect with others through Parkinson's support groups, online forums, or even exercise classes.

Speaking of exercise, make sure you do it regularly. Exercise is good for everyone, but it's especially important in Parkinson's. Exercise can lessen movement and non-movement symptoms such as depression and anxiety, which are common in Parkinson's and can increase around the time of diagnosis. Any type exercise is beneficial so find something you enjoy and will do regularly. Your doctor or a physical therapist can help you create the best plan for your interests and needs. At the same time, eat a healthy, balanced diet. There's no one specific diet for Parkinson's, but a nutritious diet that's high

in fruits, vegetables, and whole unprocessed foods is good for your body and your brain and eating well goes along with taking care of yourself in other ways. Try to get enough sleep and reduce stress as much as possible.

And lastly, get involved in the community. Taking an active role in your care and in the Parkinson's community can be a way to take control when you may feel like much is out of your hands. There are many ways to get involved. You can participate in research, which often needs volunteers who are recently diagnosed and may not yet be taking medication, or you can raise research funds, serve on patient advisory committees or advocate for Parkinson's policies. I hope that these tips are helpful as you navigate life after a Parkinson's diagnosis. You can learn more about the disease and how to take action by visiting our website.

Outro: Thanks for listening. Looking for a specific topic, not covered in today's episode? All Ask The MD blogs and videos are available for free at michaeljfox.org.

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