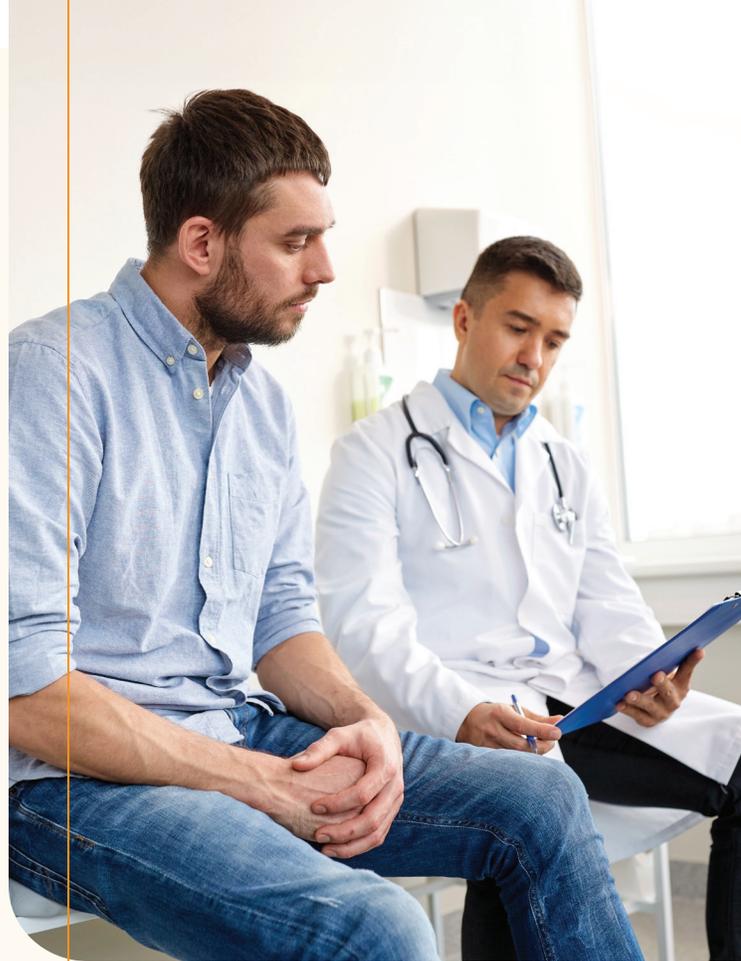


Early-Onset Parkinson's Disease: Five Things to Know

Understandably, a Parkinson's disease (PD) diagnosis may come with many questions and emotions. Because it's more common for older people to develop Parkinson's, early-onset Parkinson's disease (EOPD) is often overlooked. (It may also be called young-onset Parkinson's disease, or YOPD.) EOPD is defined as being diagnosed with Parkinson's before age 50. Since 10 to 20 percent of people with Parkinson's have EOPD, it's important to shed light on how EOPD may differ from PD diagnosed later in life.

Here are five things to know about EOPD.



1
Both genetic changes and environmental factors likely contribute to a Parkinson's diagnosis, but genetics may play a larger role in EOPD.

People with EOPD may have a longer journey to diagnosis, sometimes seeing multiple doctors and undergoing several tests before reaching a correct conclusion. When younger people and their doctors are not expecting Parkinson's disease, the diagnosis may be missed or delayed. For example, arm and shoulder stiffness may be mistaken for arthritis or a sport injury before Parkinson's is eventually diagnosed.

In everyone with Parkinson's, both genetic mutations changes and environmental factors likely contribute to a diagnosis. In younger people, especially those who have multiple family members with PD, genetics may play a larger role. If you have EOPD, you may consider genetic testing to determine whether you carry certain mutations (in the PRKN gene, for example). Learn more about genetic testing at michaeljfox.org/genetic-testing.



2

People with EOPD may be more likely to experience certain motor symptoms.

The experience of living with Parkinson's is unique to each person, for people with EOPD as well as those diagnosed later in life.

People with EOPD are more likely to experience dystonia — prolonged muscle contractions that lead to abnormal postures, such as twisting of the foot. Younger people are also more likely to develop dyskinesia,

which is involuntary movements like wriggling or body swaying. Dyskinesia can happen as a result of long-term levodopa use combined with a long course of PD. Please note: not everyone with EOPD will develop dystonia or dyskinesia.

Progression of disease over time is, in general, slower for people with EOPD.



3

Options for managing symptoms are essentially the same no matter when Parkinson's is diagnosed.

Younger people may decide to postpone starting medication to potentially delay dyskinesia. Others may hold off because some research studies are recruiting participants recently diagnosed and not yet taking medication.

Today's treatments are tailored to each person's unique symptoms. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to Parkinson's care. Some people may choose to begin with Parkinson's drugs other than levodopa, especially if symptoms are mild and don't interfere with work, physical or social activities. Options may be to

start with an MAO-B inhibitor; amantadine; or a dopamine agonist.

When and which treatments to begin are personal decisions best made with your Parkinson's doctor. When choosing therapies, consider your symptoms and how they interfere with your life, as well as potential benefits, side effects and costs. Your doctor also will consider your age and other medical conditions and medications outside of Parkinson's. Learn more about available treatments at [michaeljfox.org/medications](https://www.michaeljfox.org/medications).



4

Support is available for those living with early-onset Parkinson's disease and the unique challenges it brings.

While everyone with Parkinson's wonders about the future and what it holds, it can be especially difficult for those who are younger. People diagnosed with Parkinson's at a younger age experience unique social and professional challenges. For example, people with EOPD may have specific concerns if they are at a certain point in their career, if they have children or want to consider starting a family, or if they are caring for aging parents.

Support groups may help address these issues, while gaining a sense

of community in the process. There is a group for people with EOPD in the Parkinson's Buddy Network. This is an online platform where the Parkinson's community can connect on shared topics and interests. Learn more at parkinsonsbuddynetwork.org. Parkinson's organizations or your doctor may also be able to refer you to an EOPD support group.

For more resources including tips on navigating the workplace, relationships, family planning and parenting, visit michaeljfox.org/eopd.



5

People with early-onset Parkinson's can play a critical role in research toward a cure.

Many people with Parkinson's report that participating in research helps them feel a sense of control over their diagnosis. Our landmark Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI) follows participants over time to learn more about how brain disease starts and changes and how to stop it. PPMI is urgently recruiting people newly diagnosed with Parkinson's.

If you are age 30 and older, were diagnosed in the past two years, and have not started PD medication yet, you can play a valuable role in the study. Call **877-525-PPMI** or email joinppmi@michaeljfox.org to get started.

PPMI is open to anyone age 18 and up — with or without PD, at any stage — in the U.S. Learn more at michaeljfox.org/ppmi.

