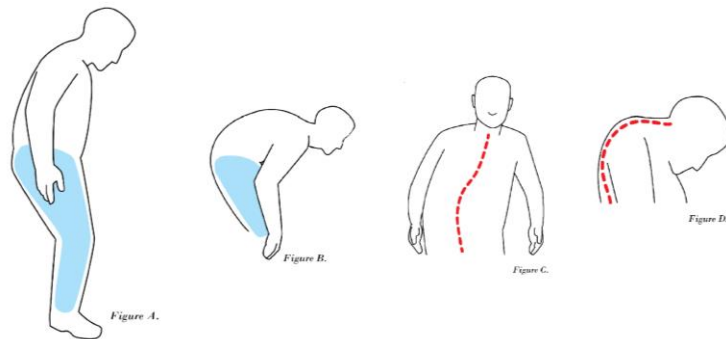


Posture and Parkinson Disease

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Fact Sheet

Postural changes can occur in people with Parkinson disease (PD) and can interfere with the ability to walk and maintain balance. Postural changes include a forward head, rounded shoulders, and bent hips and knees that cause forward leaning (Figure A). Other more severe, but rare postural problems include camptocormia (more distinct and pronounced stooped posture, Figure B), Pisa syndrome (a lateral lean, Figure C), and antecollis (dropped head, Figure D).



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It is not clear why varied atypical postures occur in people with PD. However, potential causes include: (1) Dysfunction in the neck and back muscles that keep the body in midline; (2) Over-activity of muscles that pull the neck or body forward or to the side; (3) Medication side effects that coincide with a change in medication type or dose over a short period of time; or (4) symptom progression that cannot be explained by other causes.

Postural changes can lead to poor spinal alignment and cause neck and back pain, headache, and jaw pain. Difficulty with swallowing and decreased ability to take deep breaths can impact the ability to speak clearly or loudly. Loss of flexibility that leads to difficulty moving the neck, arms, and legs can result in poor balance, altered perception of the body's position in space, and ultimately lead to falls.

Interventions to address posture changes in people with PD may help to reduce posture related activity and mobility problems and may include:

- Physical therapy
- Physical activity and exercise
- Medication adjustment
- Use of botulinum toxin injections to the muscles found to be overactive
- Deep brain stimulation

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How can I maintain or improve my posture?

- Be active and exercise.
 - Consider taking tai chi or yoga classes and engage in aerobic and resistance exercise to reduce stiffness and improve mobility.
- Use visual feedback.
 - Align yourself with something straight and tall like a doorframe.
 - Stand with your back against the wall and try to touch it with the back of your head and buttocks.
 - Check front and side views as you stand in front of a mirror to look for posture changes throughout the day.
- Ask others to tell you if they notice you are stooping.
- Change position often by taking “movement breaks.”
- Lie on your stomach.
- Use a neck and/or back roll or cushion for optimal posture when sitting.
- **See a physical therapist for a comprehensive assessment of your specific postural needs.**

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How can physical therapy help?

The physical therapist may...

- Complete an assessment to determine the possible causes of your postural changes and create an intervention strategy.
- Prescribe physical activity and exercises specific to your needs to maintain, improve, or correct your posture.
- Apply hands-on manual therapy techniques to improve joint and muscle flexibility and coordination.
- Educate you on how to modify your daily activities to promote proper posture when eating, sitting, standing, walking, working on your computer, or driving.
- Discuss recommendations for supportive bracing or assistive devices.

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What exercises can I do?

It is best to address postural changes as soon as possible to optimize movement and avoid interference to daily activities. Many different movements and exercises can be done to meet these goals.

Visit a physical therapist for a tailored assessment and intervention plan that is right for you. Go to <https://www.choosept.com/> and click on “Find a Physical Therapist” today!

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