

Mobility and Parkinson's: Simple Compensations to Enhance Movement

Parkinson's affects the part of your brain that allows you to perform automatic movements, causing motions to become slower and smaller. You may notice more problems at the end of your medication dose or when you are tired. These changes make it more difficult to perform tasks, including walking, serving a tennis ball, carrying a tray or getting up from a chair. With decreased capacity of your "autopilot", you now must **THINK** about and **PAY ATTENTION** to movements that used to come naturally, using **CONSCIOUS CONTROL** techniques.

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Preparing to Move:
 Analyze each step of the task. Perform each part separately. Rehearse it in your mind. Give yourself simple cues for each step. For example: When getting up: Scoot forward, Feet back, Nose over toes.
Another example: When rolling in bed: Bend knees, Turn head, Reach across. ☐ Ask others to remind you. (Remember your "auto pilot" is not working well.)
Walking Tips
Consider your walking pattern: Does one leg take a shorter step or is one foot not lifting as high? Is it harder to turn one way or take the first step? Is your posture straight, stooped or leaning to one side? Awareness is the key to self-correction. Concentrate on taking LONG, EVEN STEPS, emphasizing heel down first. Get into a smooth walking rhythm with a steady beat, counting or using a simple melody. Make wide U-turns, focusing on long, continuous steps. In narrow spaces, rhythmically shift weight side to side and MARCH AS YOU TURN to keep feet moving. If steps begin to shorten, STOP and start again with a long step. THINK BIG, making movements larger on your affected side.
Important Considerations
 □ Get the most from your exercise routine by ensuring you THINK BIG, using large, exaggerated movements to achieve full motion. □ Avoid multi-tasking when walking or doing other activities. Even simple tasks (buttoning coat, reaching in purse for keys), or times when you become distracted (shopping, walking the dog, thinking about something else, or trying to talk to someone when walking), may increase your risk of a fall.
Involving Your Team Seek a physical therapist for individual recommendations for improving movements.