

# Veterans and Parkinson's



The Parkinson's Foundation and the VA have partnered to improve the health, well-being and quality of life for veterans living with Parkinson's. Key resources are available through the Parkinson's Foundation and the VA to help veterans and their loved ones live better with PD.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Guide

The FAQ Guide for veterans with Parkinson's and their care partners provides an overview of important disease information and the services and resources available to the veteran community. You can download the free information guide at [Parkinson.org/VeteransFAQ](https://www.parkinsons.org/VeteransFAQ).

More than 110,000 veterans with Parkinson's disease (PD) receive care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Parkinson's Foundation is here to help veterans and their loved ones live well with PD. To find resources tailored to the veteran community, visit [Parkinson.org/Veterans](https://www.parkinsons.org/Veterans) or call the Parkinson's Foundation Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636).

## What is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's disease is a progressive, neurological disorder that occurs when the cells in the brain that make dopamine start to die. The rate of progression and symptoms are different for everyone. Movement symptoms can include tremors, slowness of movement, stiffness and problems with balance. Non-movement symptoms can include fatigue, depression, anxiety and problems with sleep.

There are nearly one million people in the U.S. living with PD and an additional 90,000 people are newly diagnosed each year. There is no cure for Parkinson's, but treatment can improve quality of life. Treatment options include medication, exercise, rehabilitation therapies (physical, occupational, and speech therapies), surgical options and a healthy diet.

## Medical Care and Treatment

Many U.S. military veterans with Parkinson's have access to specialized medical care and financial assistance through the VA. The VA treats veterans with Parkinson's through medical centers known as Parkinson's Disease Research, Education & Clinical Centers (PADRECCs). Visit [parkinsons.va.gov](https://www.parkinsons.va.gov) or call 1-800-949-1001 x205769 to learn more about how to access care through the PADRECCs and their Associated Sites. To apply for VA healthcare, visit [va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply](https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply) or call 1-877-222-8387.

## Agent Orange and Toxic Exposures

In some cases, a Parkinson's diagnosis can be linked to Agent Orange or other toxin exposure from a veteran's military service. Agent Orange was a powerful herbicide used in Vietnam from 1962 to 1975, but was also used and stored in other locations. Veterans may be eligible for a free environmental health registry evaluation, disability compensation and other VA benefits. To learn more, visit [Parkinson.org/Veterans](https://www.parkinsons.org/Veterans) or call the Veteran Benefits Administration at 1-800-827-1000.

## 10 Early Signs

It can be hard to tell if you have Parkinson's. Below are 10 signs that you might have the disease. No single one means that you should worry, but if you have more than one sign, you should consider making an appointment to talk to your doctor.

1. Tremor
2. Small handwriting
3. Loss of smell
4. Trouble sleeping
5. Trouble moving or walking
6. Constipation
7. Soft or low voice
8. Masked face
9. Dizziness or fainting
10. Stooping

For the latest information about veterans and Parkinson's, visit [Parkinson.org/Veterans](https://www.parkinson.org/Veterans).

Your local Parkinson's Foundation Chapter can help you find nearby programs, support groups and resources. To find your local Chapter, visit [Parkinson.org/InYourArea](https://www.parkinson.org/InYourArea).

## Veterans Benefits

Veterans living with Parkinson's may qualify for financial benefit programs to help cope with financial challenges. Service members, veterans and families can apply for various VA benefits by:

- ✓ Applying online at [eBenefits.va.gov](https://www.eBenefits.va.gov).
- ✓ Working with an accredited representative or VSO. Federal law prohibits attorneys and others from charging a fee to assist with the VA application.
- ✓ Calling the VA's toll-free hotline at **1-800-827-1000**, Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET.

## Caring for a Veteran with Parkinson's

The care partner experience is unique to every individual. The Parkinson's Foundation and VA have resources specially designed for those caring for a veteran with Parkinson's. Regardless of whether you are early in the journey, caring from afar or supporting a loved one in the advanced stages of Parkinson's, we have the resources to help. Learn more at [Parkinson.org/Veterans](https://www.parkinson.org/Veterans).

## Hospital Safety

Every person living with Parkinson's should be prepared for a possible hospitalization including veterans and their care partners. Visit [Parkinson.org/HospitalSafety](https://www.parkinson.org/HospitalSafety) to learn more and order or download your Hospital Safety Guide.

## Mental Health

Mental health concerns like depression and anxiety are common in people with PD. They can be the result of living with a chronic condition, but they can also be a symptom of the disease itself and changes in the brain. Be aware of these symptoms and do not hesitate to talk to your doctor. Keep the **Veterans Crisis Line** number nearby, just in case: dial **988**, then press 1 or text 838255.



## You are not alone.

Whether you are newly diagnosed or have been living with Parkinson's for many years, the Parkinson's Foundation can help you find the resources that work best for you.

- ✓ Explore [Parkinson.org/Resources](https://www.parkinson.org/Resources).
- ✓ Join our virtual community at [PDConversations.org](https://www.pdconversations.org).
- ✓ Call our Helpline at **1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636)** for answers to your Parkinson's questions.