



Fatigue & Energy Conservation

Practical Strategies to Protect Energy, Reduce Crashes, and Support Daily Life

Fatigue is one of the most common—and least visible—symptoms of Parkinson’s disease. It can appear even after a full night’s sleep, fluctuate throughout the day, and worsen during medication “off” periods. For many people, fatigue is not just feeling tired; it is a **neurological exhaustion** that affects movement, thinking, motivation, and mood.

Learning how to conserve energy is not about doing less—it’s about **doing what matters, more sustainably**.

Through the **Wisconsin Parkinson Association**, individuals with Parkinson’s can access practical tools that make fatigue more manageable and daily life more predictable.

Fatigue in Parkinson’s is a symptom, not a personal failing.

Energy conservation is a therapeutic strategy.

Why Fatigue Happens in Parkinson’s

Parkinson’s-related fatigue is influenced by changes in brain chemistry and nervous system regulation. Common contributors include:

- Dopamine dysregulation
- Medication fluctuations
- Poor or disrupted sleep
- Physical exertion
- Cognitive overload
- Emotional stress, anxiety, or depression
- Autonomic nervous system changes

Because fatigue is neurologically driven, pushing through it often **worsens symptoms** rather than improving endurance.

Recognizing Different Types of Fatigue

Fatigue in Parkinson's may show up in different ways:

- **Physical fatigue:** heaviness, weakness, slowed movement
- **Mental fatigue:** difficulty concentrating, decision fatigue, “brain fog”
- **Emotional fatigue:** low motivation, irritability, feeling overwhelmed

Noticing which type is present helps guide the right response.

Core Principles of Energy Conservation

Pace, Don't Push

- Alternate activity with rest
- Stop before exhaustion sets in
- Break tasks into smaller steps

Consistent pacing prevents the steep energy crashes that can derail the rest of the day.

Plan Around Stronger Times

- Schedule demanding tasks during peak medication “on” times
- Group activities to reduce repeated transitions
- Build buffer time between commitments

Planning supports reliability and confidence.

Prioritize What Matters Most

- Identify essential vs. optional tasks
- Let go of non-critical perfection

- Save energy for people and activities that bring meaning

Energy spent on what matters most improves quality of life—even when quantity is limited.

Practical Daily Energy-Saving Strategies

Use Micro-Rest Breaks

Short, intentional rest (5–10 minutes) can reset the nervous system.

- Sit or recline
- Reduce stimulation
- Close eyes or practice slow breathing

Micro-rests are preventive—not a sign of defeat.

Sit Instead of Stand

Standing requires more balance and muscle activation.

- Sit to prepare meals
- Sit while showering or dressing
- Sit for tasks that allow it

Choosing seating conserves neurological energy.

Simplify Routines

- Create consistent morning and evening routines
- Reduce daily decision-making
- Automate or batch recurring tasks

Less cognitive load preserves mental stamina.

Delegate & Accept Help

- Share household tasks
- Ask for help with errands or transportation
- Use tools and adaptive equipment

Accepting help is an energy-saving choice, not a loss of independence.

Fatigue at Work or in the Community

Helpful supports may include:

- Flexible scheduling
- Short rest breaks
- Quiet spaces to reduce sensory overload
- Written instructions or reminders
- Noise-reducing headphones

Workplace accommodations can protect energy and prolong participation.

Exercise & Fatigue: Finding the Balance

Regular exercise improves long-term energy—but timing matters.

- Choose activities you enjoy
- Exercise during higher-energy windows
- Avoid overexertion
- Allow recovery time

Exercise should leave you strengthened, not depleted.

Sleep & Fatigue

Sleep quality directly affects daytime energy.

- Keep consistent bed and wake times
- Address nighttime symptoms with your provider

- Limit screens before bed
- Treat sleep disorders when present

Better sleep does not cure fatigue—but it improves resilience.

When to Talk with Your Care Team

Contact your provider if:

- Fatigue worsens suddenly
- Fatigue limits daily function
- Mood changes accompany fatigue
- Medication timing seems to worsen energy
- Safety becomes a concern

Fatigue is treatable—and deserves attention.

Fatigue Does Not Define Your Capability

Living well with Parkinson's often means working **with** your energy, not against it. Conserving energy protects movement, thinking, mood, and independence over time.

Managing fatigue is an act of self-care—and self-respect.

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