

Whey protein

Some research has suggested that whey protein may help people with parkinsonism or Parkinson's disease, but further studies are necessary to determine its effectiveness. In 2016, scientists gave 15 people whey protein and 17 people soy protein supplements for 6 months. Compared with soy, whey protein significantly increased levels of an antioxidant, glutathione. Glutathione can help reduce levels of plasma homocysteine, an oxidative species that occurs in high levels in people with Parkinson's disease. In a 2019 study, people with parkinsonism or Parkinson's disease consumed a whey protein-based nutritional formula enriched with leucine and vitamin D twice a day for 30 days. Then, they participated in a walking test. The results showed that their lower body function improved. The supplement also appeared to help them retain muscle mass.

Coenzyme Q10

Oily fish, organ meats, and whole grains contain coenzyme Q10, which promotes brain function. A clinical trial is currently exploring whether coenzyme Q10 benefits people with Parkinson's disease. A description of this trial also states that people in a previous trial tolerated coenzyme Q10 well in the early stages of Parkinson's disease and that it may help slow progressive impairment.

FOODS TO AVOID WITH PARKINSON'S

You may want to avoid or limit your intake of certain foods if you have Parkinson's.

Foods high in saturated fat

Although the specific role of saturated fat in Parkinson's is still being studied, research suggests that a high dietary fat intake may increase your risk of this disease. Generally speaking, diets high in saturated fat have been linked to chronic conditions like heart disease. As such, you may wish to keep these foods in moderation. Some foods high in saturate fat include:

- Beef.
- Lard.
- Butter.
- Cheese.
- Palm oil.
- Some baked and fried foods.

Conversely, a very small study notes that the keto diet – which is high in fat – is beneficial for some people with Parkinson's. However, a low fat diet also showed benefits. Overall, more research is needed.

Foods that are hard to chew

Another Parkinson's symptom is difficulty chewing and swallowing. In fact, it's estimated that 80% of people with this condition experience difficulty swallowing as the disease progresses. Choosing foods that are easy to chew and swallow may be important, as may working with a speech language therapist.

Processed foods

Lastly, it's recommended to limit or avoid processed foods, such as canned foods, fried foods, and regular and diet sodas, as these have been linked to a more rapid progression of Parkinson's. Processed foods may also impair gut health, which may affect symptom severity.

SUMMARY

Insufficient research is available to recommend a specific diet to treat Parkinson's disease. However, there's reason to believe that a healthy diet – alongside regular exercise – may help improve symptoms. Keep in mind that certain foods and supplements may interfere with prescription drugs for this disease, so make sure you consult your doctor before changing your treatment routine.



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PARKINSON'S DISEASE NUTRITION

Parkinson's disease affects nearly 1 million people in the UK. Each year, another 60,000 people are diagnosed with the condition. Symptoms vary from person to person but commonly include muscle spasms, tremors, and muscle soreness. The causes and triggers that activate Parkinson's are still being studied. This leaflet will explore how diet can affect individuals with Parkinson's as well as which foods may help or worsen symptoms.

THE ROLE OF DIET IN PARKINSON'S

Levodopa (Sinemet) and bromocriptine (Parlodel) are common drugs that many people with Parkinson's take to manage symptoms. However, no treatment will fully stop symptoms. Since there's no cure for Parkinson's, and the drugs prescribed to manage symptoms sometimes have harsh side effects, some people may be interested in alternative remedies. While diet won't cure Parkinson's, early research suggests that certain dietary changes may help alleviate symptoms for some people. Because this condition is closely connected to a lack of dopamine cells in your body, researchers are looking for ways to increase dopamine naturally through your diet. Plus, secondary symptoms of Parkinson's, such as dementia and confusion, may improve through lifestyle changes like diet and exercise.

Foods high in antioxidants may also help cut down on oxidative stress in your brain, which may be responsible for some of the mental decline seen in Parkinson's. Additionally, you may be able to relieve constipation — another potential symptom — with fibre and probiotics. Finally, taking magnesium may relieve muscle cramps that can occur in Parkinson's. Still, low levels of this mineral are thought to contribute to the development of Parkinson's, so magnesium remains important.

LIFESTYLE TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S

Here are a few basic lifestyle tips that may help ease Parkinson's symptoms:

- **Drink plenty of water** - Staying hydrated is especially important for people with Parkinson's, who often don't experience typical thirst sensations. Aim to drink 6–8 full glasses (1.2–1.6 litres) of water each day to feel your best.
- **Spend time outside** - Vitamin D has been demonstrated to protect against Parkinson's, so getting fresh air and sunshine may ease your symptoms.
- **Get moving** - Various kinds of exercise and physical therapy may improve your abilities and slow the progression of Parkinson's.
- **Consider supplements** - Talk to your doctor about supplements and other therapies that may be safe for you to try.



FOODS THAT MAY HELP PARKINSON'S

Some research focuses on proteins, flavonoids, and gut bacteria for improving Parkinson's symptoms, but the research is ongoing and still inconclusive. More research has shown that diets high in antioxidants may provide brain-protective benefits and slow the progression of the disease in older adults.

Antioxidants

Antioxidants protect against oxidative stress, which is an imbalance of antioxidants and unstable compounds called free radicals that occurs in Parkinson's disease. The following foods contain large amounts of antioxidants:

- **Nuts:** Walnuts, Brazil nuts, pecans, and pistachios.
- **Berries:** Blueberries, blackberries, goji berries, cranberries, and elderberries.
- **Nightshade vegetables:** Tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant.
- **Leafy green vegetables:** Spinach and kale.

Eating a plant-based diet high in these types of foods may provide the highest antioxidant intake. Researchers are also exploring an antioxidant treatment for Parkinson's, though studies remain inconclusive.

Fava beans

Some people eat fava beans for Parkinson's because they contain levodopa — the same compound used in some Parkinson's drugs. However, no definitive evidence shows that these beans help reduce symptoms. Additionally, because you don't know how much levodopa you're getting when you eat fava beans, you shouldn't use them as a substitute for prescription treatments.

Omega-3 foods

Omega-3 fatty acids, which are types of healthy fats, may help improve brain function in those with Parkinson's. These fats are found in foods like:

- Salmon.
- Halibut.
- Oysters.
- Soy beans.
- Flaxseed.
- Kidney beans.

Some research also suggests that the Mediterranean diet, which tends to be high in antioxidants and omega-3s, protects against dementia in Parkinson's disease.

Certain nutrient-dense foods

Malnutrition has been found to be a risk factor for mental decline. Additionally, individuals with Parkinson's disease are more likely to suffer from malnutrition. Here are some food sources of nutrients that many people with Parkinson's are deficient in:

- **Iron:** Spinach, beef, tofu, and fortified breakfast cereals.
- **Vitamin B1:** Pork, beans, lentils, and peas.
- **Zinc:** Whole grains, red meat, oysters, and chicken.
- **Vitamin D:** Salmon, tuna fish, fortified dairy products, and cod liver oil.
- **Calcium:** Dairy products, green leafy veggies, and fortified soy products.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can help lower levels of reactive oxygen species (ROS), which people sometimes call free radicals. ROS are by products of certain bodily processes. High levels of ROS can lead to oxidative stress and pose a risk of cell damage and inflammation.

Vitamin C is also useful in regenerating other antioxidants. Vitamin C is present in many fruits and vegetables, including:

- Citrus fruits
- Strawberries
- Tomatoes
- Broccoli
- White potatoes

Vitamin E

Research associates vitamin E with improved cognitive performance.
Foods rich in vitamin E include:

- Sunflower oil and seeds
- Almonds
- Peanuts
- Asparagus
- Avocado

Omega-3 fatty acids

Various studies have indicated that omega-3 fatty acids might benefit people with Parkinson's disease. According to a 2022 review, omega-3s may benefit the body through a range of processes, such as:

- Preventing inflammation
- Supporting neuron growth and health
- Reducing production of oxidant species
- Helping the body process calcium

Vitamin D

Vitamin D deficiency is common, and people with Parkinson's disease have a higher risk of this deficiency than the general population. Vitamin D deficiency may also have a connection to disease severity and progression in people with Parkinson's. The body creates vitamin D during exposure to sunlight, but dietary vitamin D is also essential, and some people may need a supplement. People with Parkinson's disease should ask a healthcare professional to check their vitamin D levels. If a person's vitamin D levels are low or deficient, a healthcare professional can recommend supplementation at an appropriate dose to increase them.

B vitamins

B vitamins are important for memory and coordination. Dietary sources of vitamin B12 include:

- Beef
- Clams
- Tuna
- Nutritional yeast
- Dairy products
- Fortified breakfast cereals