

GAIT, BALANCE AND FREEZING WORKSHEET

Physical exercise and training

- Balance is so important for walking. Perform balance exercises every day, even before you think you need them. Consider it part of your routine – like brushing your teeth. You can improve your balance even if it seems perfect right now!
- Daily exercise should include stretching, strengthening and exercises to help you get out of a chair, stand straighter and walk farther.
- See a physical therapist to develop a home exercise program even if you have one. Ask your PT when you should be re-evaluated. Do not wait for your doctor to initiate it – you can ask for it.
- Practice making wide U-turns rather than pivot turns to avoid falling.
- If you need an ambulatory aid, use it. It will help you walk better, keep you safe and remain independent longer. Be sure you see your physical therapist to choose the correct cane or walker as the wrong one can cause falls!

Lifestyle and good habits

- Try to time your exercise to the time of day you feel best such as when you are in the on state and your medicines are working.
- Develop the habit of exercise. Five minutes of exercise daily is better than 20 minutes once a week.
- Establish a routine. Write your goals and expectations on a calendar.
- Exercise with a buddy. Everyone in your family can benefit. Consider a “balance night” devoted to balance games. You do not need fancy video games for this. Make up your own challenges by standing on a pillow, one leg or straight line. Always think safety first so it is a good idea to involve your physical therapist before beginning.
- Avoid multitasking. Do one thing at a time. Avoid carrying multiple objects in both hands if you have trouble walking. This helps you focus on the task of walking if you have trouble.

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Dietary change

- Dizziness and low blood pressure can cause weakness, fatigue, loss of consciousness and falls. See the dizziness and nutrition worksheets for additional treatment recommendations.
- Eat high-energy foods listed in **Section 3** rather than processed high-sugar foods that rob you of your energy.

Treatment

- There are many causes of walking and balance problems. There is a tendency to blame difficulties solely on Parkinson's. Fatigue, heart and lung conditions, muscle weakness, stroke, inner-ear problems, peripheral neuropathy, joint pain and arthritis are examples of conditions that occur with greater frequency as we age. See your healthcare provider to be sure that these problems are treated.

Tips for freezing: Freezing (feet stuck to the floor) occurs in crowded, small places, with initiating movement such as when you stand and begin walking, make a turn or with any stop and start of movement.

- Learn to make wide "U-turns." Avoid pivoting and if you use a walker be sure your walker is the right type for freezing.
- See your physical therapist to review cueing strategies. Lasers, guided imagery, marching, walking to the beat of a musical rhythm to help get you over or through a freezing spell can help.
- See your occupational therapist to review areas that cause you to freeze. Can crowded spaces be identified such as bathrooms or closets? Can these areas be modified by removing clutter?
- Experiment with flooring and shoes. Shoes with soft rubber soles are comfortable, but may "stick" to the floor. Different flooring textures, color changes and patterns can precipitate freezing, i.e. change in flooring threshold from tile to carpet.
- Experiment with putting tape on the floor a step distance apart. This can serve as a cue and help you lift your legs to walk over and through a tight space or threshold.

Giroux/Farris

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Every Victory Counts