



## **PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition; it affects about 1 in 500 people in the UK and is more common in people over the age of 65. Parkinson's is not curable, however, symptoms can be improved with medication.

Parkinson's affects everybody differently; the symptoms vary from person to person and not everybody experiences all of them. The severity of symptoms can also fluctuate and many people with Parkinson's find they have good and bad days.

### **What are the symptoms?**

- Stiffness or muscular rigidity
- Slowness of movement
- Tremor

In addition to these main symptoms, people may have problems with speech, swallowing, balance, loss of confidence and depression. The symptoms usually develop slowly and may take years to progress to a point where they cause major problems.

After the diagnosis has been made, it takes time and support for a person to understand and come to terms with Parkinson's and to learn to live with the changes it has brought, and will bring, to their lives. How they are affected and how they will feel, will depend in their individual circumstances. In the early stages of Parkinson's their life may not be affected at all, but later on as the illness develops, they may have to make changes in their life. It is a good idea to plan ahead where you can; this will help you to be ready for future decisions.

### **Looking after yourself**

It is essential as a carer that you look after your own health:

- Try and eat a healthy diet
- Try and make sure you get enough rest

- Get support before difficulties arise and reach crisis point
- Try to make time for friends and hobbies
- Talk about what you are doing and how you are feeling
- Recognise the signs of stress and seek support
- Look after your back if you have to lift people

## **Who can help?**

### Parkinson's Specialists

These are hospital doctors who have a particular interest in Parkinson's. Referral to a specialist is beneficial because Parkinson's can require complex drug treatment that may need to be changed as the condition progresses.

### Adult Social Services

Support services to help people to manage at home are usually provided by Adult Services; they include such things as help with personal care, day care and respite care.

In order to work out which services are needed, adult services will have to carry out an assessment. If the person is in hospital, this will be carried out by the hospital social worker. If the person is at home, this should be requested via the Initial Assessment Team, who can be contacted on 0845 644 4314.

### Parkinson's Disease Society - Stockport

Will provide information, advice and support. The society has regular monthly meetings for both sufferers and their carers. Telephone 0161 430 7730 for more details.

### Parkinson's Disease Society (PDS)

The PDS offers a free helpline, information on all aspects of Parkinson's, and a wide range of information sheets and booklets, including a 'Carers Guide' and 'Parkinson's and You; an introductory guide'. The PDS also publishes a regular magazine.

The Helpline is open Monday -Friday, 9.30am -5.30pm, and the telephone number is 0808 800 0303.