



# AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION

## IOWA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Oct/Nov/Dec  
2025

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## YOUR SECOND BRAIN: THE GUT'S ROLE IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE



*Richard A. Manfreedy, MD, AM, FACP, is a physician-scientist who specializes in disorders of the gut-brain axis. His lab has made discoveries connecting Parkinson's disease with GI disorders and has translated those findings to benefit patients. Dr. Manfreedy is a gastroenterologist and hepatologist at Cedar Valley Digestive Health, where he is Director of Motility, and is Assistant Professor, Adj. at Rush University Medical Center. He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology, and Hepatology, and was elected as a Fellow of the American College of Physicians. He is supported by Dr. Harichandana Punukula, Jane Baker, and our dedicated research team.*

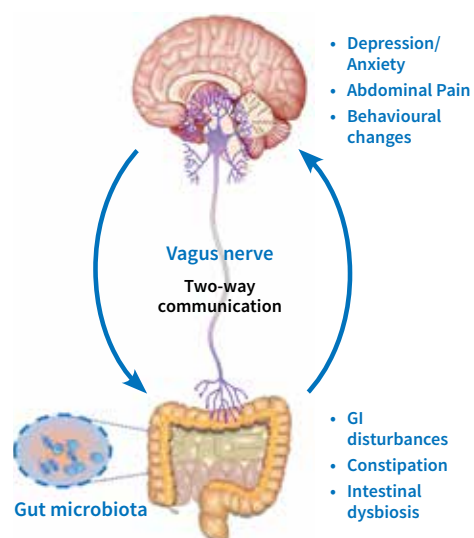
When most people think about Parkinson's disease (PD), the first things that come to mind are tremors, stiffness, or slowed movements. But there's another side of Parkinson's that isn't talked about as much: **the gut**.

Doctors and scientists now call the gut our "second brain." Why? Because it has its own network of nerves and trillions of bacteria that help control not just digestion, but also mood, immunity, and even brain health. And for people with PD, the gut often plays an especially important role.

### Why the Gut Matters in PD

The gut and brain are connected by a "highway" called the vagus nerve. This pathway allows the two to constantly communicate. What happens in the gut can influence the the brain, and what happens in the brain can affect the gut.

In PD, many people experience digestive problems such as constipation, bloating, or slow digestion years before movement symptoms appear. Scientists now believe these gut changes may be one of the earliest warning signs of Parkinson's.



# YOUR SECOND BRAIN: THE GUT'S ROLE IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE (cont.)

## Constipation: A Common but Overlooked Problem

Constipation is one of the most common non-motor symptoms of PD. It is not just uncomfortable; it can affect everyday life in big ways. People with constipation may feel sluggish, bloated, or anxious about their next bowel movement.

Constipation also matters because it can make PD medications, like levodopa, work less effectively. If the gut is slow, the medicine is absorbed more slowly too. This means motor symptoms like tremor or stiffness may be harder to control.

Unfortunately, common remedies such as laxatives, stool softeners, or fiber supplements often don't work very well for PD-related constipation. That's why new treatments are needed.

## Our Research: Testing Tenapanor (Ibsrela)

At Cedar Valley Digestive Health Research, we are running a study to test a medication called Tenapanor in people with Parkinson's disease who struggle with constipation.

Tenapanor is an FDA-approved drug for IBS-C (Irritable Bowel Syndrome with Constipation). It works in the intestines by blocking sodium absorption, which draws more water into the stool. This makes bowel movements softer, easier, and more regular.

We are studying whether Tenapanor can safely and effectively improve constipation in PD. If successful, it could not only help people feel more comfortable but also improve how well their PD medications work.

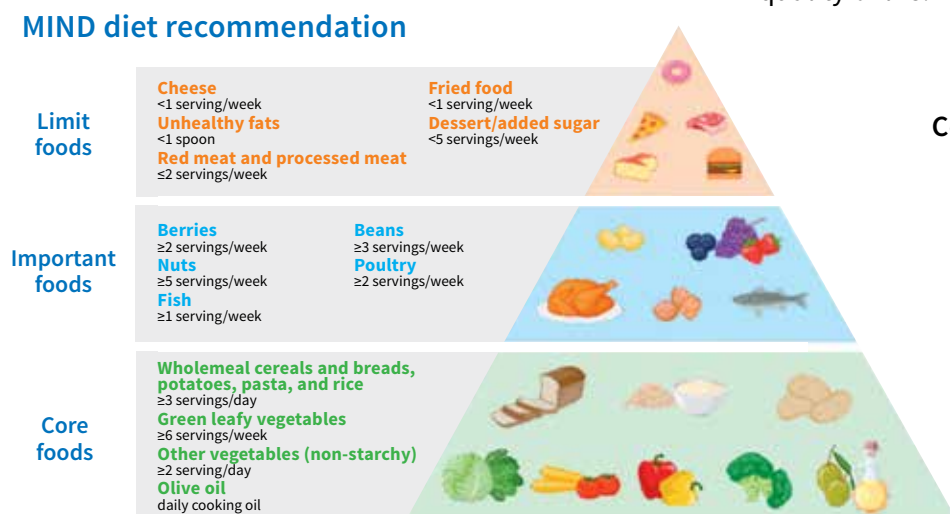
## Caring for Both Brains: Lifestyle and Diet

Thinking of the gut as a second brain reminds us that gut health is brain health. Beyond medications, lifestyle choices play a powerful role in reducing inflammation and supporting both gut and brain function.

- **Mediterranean and MIND diet:** Rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, and fish, this diet has been shown to lower inflammation and support brain health. Studies suggest it may also reduce progression of PD symptoms and improve overall quality of life (Estrada et al., *Nutrients* 2022). *See the graphic below for recommendations.*
- **Probiotics and prebiotics:** Research is exploring how balancing gut bacteria may improve digestion and potentially affect neurological health (Lubomski et al., *Journal of Parkinson's Disease* 2020).

## Learn More

If you or a loved one has Parkinson's disease and struggles with constipation, we invite you to learn more about our Tenapanor study. Together, we can take steps toward better treatments and a better quality of life.



## Cedar Valley Digestive Health Research

Email: [hpunukula@cvmmspc.com](mailto:hpunukula@cvmmspc.com)

1015 D Hackett Rd, Waterloo, Iowa

Website: [cvdhresearch.com](http://cvdhresearch.com)

Phone: (319) 486-4582

## 2025 IOWA OPTIMISM WALK RECAP

This year's Iowa Optimism Walk would not be possible without the incredible support of our Presenting, Platinum, and Gold Sponsors. Their generosity helps fuel APDA's mission and ensures that the funds we raise together make the greatest possible impact for the Parkinson's community. With their partnership, and yours, we've raised over \$160,000 to keep education, support, and exercise programs at no cost for Iowans living with Parkinson's.







Platinum Sponsor



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Attendee Experience Sponsor



Care and comfort at a moment's notice.



# LIVING YOUR PERSONAL BEST:

## PARKINSONISM and the COGNITIVE CONNECTION

By Valerie Stickel-Diehl, RN, MS, MSCN



I hope this information will help you and your care partners become aware of Parkinson's symptoms that may impact cognition.

Let's start with the definition of **COGNITION** and **MEMORY**

**COGNITION** is the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and the SENSES. (Sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch).

**MEMORY** is the ability (and desire) to store and retrieve information, immediate recall and long-term recollection.

**SYMPTOMS** shared by those living with Parkinson's Disease:

**LACK OF INTEREST** in activities of daily living, family, hobbies, exercise, and planning. **CHANGES** in personality, hygiene, response time, follow through of tasks, forgetfulness (especially about conversations), challenges with medication schedule and purpose.

**LIVING WITH PD IS LIKE USING AN ENERGY BANK ACCOUNT...** it sometimes feels like you are overdrawn. Physical demands to do even simple movements can be draining physically and mentally. It is often described as brain fog. Things like muscle tightness, balance issues, swallowing, eating, blinking, interrupted sleep at night, speech and voice volume, can cause enough stress to withdraw from activities. Life becomes smaller.

### GOOD NEWS!!

Once you are able to identify things that empty your energy bank account, you can use strategies to make intentional deposits.

1. **Medication Evaluation**, some medications and over-the-counter pills actually can make you sleepy and decrease mental alertness. Timing of medication can be adjusted to use when you want to be sleepy.
2. **Hydration**, your brain and organs all need fluids. Water is best. Dehydration is a complication leading to balance issues, confusion and lack of energy.
3. **Nutrition**, protein is needed for healing and energy, find high plant protein to consume during the day, small frequent meals are great for energy. Eat protein rich foods later in the day.
4. **Group Exercise**, more stimulating, fun, and opportunity for socializing.
5. **Sleep Evaluation**, interruption of sleep from bladder urgency. Comfort in bed can be an issue, difficulty turning and getting comfortable. Pain control is important.
6. **Energy conservation techniques**, occupational therapy, bathe at night rather than in the morning. Remember good hygiene is needed to prevent skin infections and flakey skin. Skin is impacted by PD, excess sweating and other skin changes occur.
7. **Purpose in each day**, schedule something to rise to the occasion. Find Joy.
8. **Hearing evaluations, vision exams, and swallow evaluations**, all would be something to discuss with your doctor.

Remember, SUDDEN changes most likely are due to something else in your body. Please always discuss any questions with your healthcare provider.

*Live your personal best each day... Valerie*

# Tips and Tricks for Parkinson's

Provided by: Drake University Occupational Therapy Doctoral Students Class of 2025

## Typing & Computer Use

- **Voice Text:** Use voice text to type faster and reduce typing errors.
- **Computer Settings:** Change the mouse setting on your computer to filter out handshaking.
- **Large Keyboards:** Use a larger keyboard with separated buttons to make typing easier and prevent hitting keys by mistake.
- **Use Predictive Text:** Predictive text is a setting on most smartphones and computers that will complete a word for you after you type the first few letters.

## APDA Strictly Social

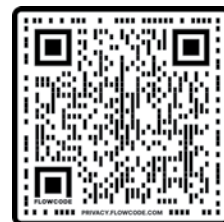
Living with Parkinson's disease doesn't mean you have to do it alone. The American Parkinson Disease Association invites you to join **Strictly Social** — a series of welcoming social events for people with Parkinson's disease and their care partners, family members, and friends.

Whether you've been recently diagnosed or living with PD for years, our social programs offer a fun, relaxed way to meet others in the Parkinson's community, share stories, and create joyful moments together.

*Join us on the third Tuesday of each month at the APDA Urbandale office*

- and*
- Connect with others who understand the Parkinson's journey
  - Enjoy low-pressure, judgment-free environments
  - Reconnect with joy, laughter, and new friendships
  - Strengthen mental and emotional well-being through social engagement

Does this sound like something you would like to be a part of as a volunteer to lead a group near you?  
Please let us know your interest by reaching out to Susan Callison at [scallison@apdaparkinson.org](mailto:scallison@apdaparkinson.org) or call 515.782.4386.



# SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

**Ackley - Ackley Civic Center**

2nd Wednesday 2:00 - 4:00 pm

**Altoona - Prairie Vista Village**

3rd Thursday - 10:00 am

**Ames - Northridge Village**

3rd Thursday - 10:00 am

**Anamosa - Jones Regional Medical Center**

1st Monday 3:00 pm

**Bettendorf - Palmer Hills Retirement Center**

3rd Saturday 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

**Burlington - Great River Medical Center**

3rd Thursday 2:00 pm

**Carroll - St. Anthony's Regional Hospital**

Thursday 11:00 am

**Centerville - MercyOne**

3rd Thursday 5:30 pm March - November

**Creston - Salem Lutheran Church**

3rd Monday 2:00 - 3:30 pm

**Des Moines- Wesley on Grand**

1st Wednesday 2:00 pm

**Dubuque - Unity Point Finley Hospital**

3rd Saturday 10:00 - 11:00 am

**Fairfield - Jefferson County Health Center**

1st Tuesday 4:00 pm

**Forest City - Forest City YMCA**

3rd Friday 10:00 am

**Fort Dodge - Friendship Haven Schmoker Bldg.**

1st Wednesday 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

**Indianola - The Village**

3rd Thursday 10:00 am

**Iowa City - Grand Living at Bridgewater**

3rd Tuesday 6:00 - 7:00 pm

**Johnston - Brio at Johnston**

2nd Monday, 2:00pm

**Leon - Decatur County Hospital**

3rd Tuesday 11:30 am

**Logan - Logan United Methodist Church**

Every Tuesday 10:30am

**Marshalltown - YMCA**

2nd Tuesday 10:30 am

**Mason City - MROM-RSB MC**

3rd Thursdays 2:30 - 3:30 pm

**Northwood - Viking Activity Center**

2nd Thursday 1:30 pm

**Osceola - Clarke County Hospital**

2nd Wednesday 1:00 - 2:00 pm

**Ottumwa - Ottumwa YMCA**

1st Tuesday 1:00 pm

**Pella - Pella Manor at Hearthstone**

2nd Tuesday 2:00pm

**Sioux City - Siouxland Center  
for Active Generation**

4th Monday 1:00 pm

**Sioux Center - Crown Pointe Estates**

2nd Thursday 10:00am

**Spirit Lake - Bedell Family YMCA**

1st Tuesday 9:30 am

**Storm Lake - St. Mark Lutheran Church**

2nd Tuesday 1:30 pm

**Urbandale - Life Time**

3rd Thursday, 12:00 pm

**Waukee - Independence Village**

3rd Friday 1:30 pm

**Waverly - Waverly Health Center**

3rd Thursday 1:30-3:00 pm

**Webster City - Van Diest Medical Center**

3rd Tuesday 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

**West Des Moines - West Des Moines Edgewater**

3rd Wednesday 1:00 pm

**West Des Moines - Grand Living Tower Place**

3rd Saturday 10:00 am

**West Des Moines - Rock Valley Physical Therapy**

2nd Wednesday 12:30-1:30 pm

**West Des Moines - Cedar Ridge Village**

3rd Thursday 1:30pm

**West Des Moines/Polk County - Young Onset**

Call us for more information.

Please contact Kim Roby or Michelle Lorey for information about location and timings.

Private Facebook Group- Search: Parkinson's Young Onset Support Group of Iowa

Questions - Stephanie Wilson, 515-207-9332, [swilson@apdaparkinson.org](mailto:swilson@apdaparkinson.org)

# EXERCISE CLASS SCHEDULE

## **Ankeny - Edencrest Siena Hills**

Wednesday 10:00 am - Movement Training Level 1

## **Cedar Rapids - COMING SOON!**

## **Clive - Walnut Ride Senior Living**

Friday 10:00 am - Water Aerobics, Level 2

## **Creston - Salem Lutheran Church**

Monday 1:30 pm - Movement Training Level 2

## **Davenport - COMING SOON!**

## **Des Moines - Northside Senior Center**

Wednesday 10:00 am - Movement Training Level 1

## **Des Moines - Des Moines Ballroom**

*Starts September 8th, 2025*

Monday 6:30 pm - PD Moves Dance

## **Fairfield - Fairfield Community Center**

*Starts September 3rd, 2025*

Wednesday 2:45-3:30pm - Movement Training Level 1

## **Grimes - Climb Iowa**

**ON HOLD UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

Level 3 Rock Climbing

## **Iowa City - Iowa City Senior Center**

Wednesday 10:00 am - Movement Training Level 2

## **Ottumwa - River Valley Place Assisted Living**

Tuesday 10:00am - Movement Training Level 1

## **Pleasant Hill - Edencrest at Pleasant Hill**

Friday 9:45 am - Movement Training Level 1

## **Waukee - Independence Village**

Monday 11:00 am - Movement Training Level 2

Friday 11:00 am - Movement Training Level 3

## **Class Levels**

**LEVEL 1:** Participants exercise seated or standing with support. Movements are done at a pace and intensity that are appropriate for each participant.

**LEVEL 2:** Participants must be able to walk and stand up from a chair without assistance. Most exercises are done standing.

**LEVEL 3:** Higher intensity, faster paced classes where participants perform multiple step exercises and may get on/off the floor.

Exercise and support group classes are subject to change. Check the website for the most up to date schedule.

**Questions - Stephanie Wilson, 515-207-9332, [swilson@apdaparkinson.org](mailto:swilson@apdaparkinson.org)**

# BRAIN GAME - WORD PUZZLE

Cognitive exercise is just as important as physical exercise. Activities like puzzles, reading, card games, or learning something new help keep your brain sharp and engaged. Social interaction, spending time with friends and family, is also a powerful way to stimulate the mind.

**Directions: Fill in each box with a word that fits in the category on top and starts with the letter on the left.**

	Sports	Food/Drink	Holidays	States
G	<i>Example: Golf</i>			
T				
F				
I				

	Cities	Furniture	Colors	Names
B				
S				
T				
C				

This word puzzle is provided by Cassie Serrata at Connect Therapy. Connect Therapy is located in West Des Moines and provides speech, language and swallowing therapy for all ages.  
[www.connecttherapyiowa.com](http://www.connecttherapyiowa.com)



## Make a Difference Today and Save on Taxes

Did you know you can support APDA and reduce your taxable income at the same time? If you're age 70 ½ or older, you can make a tax-free gift of up to \$100,000 each year directly from your IRA to a qualified nonprofit like APDA.

This giving option known as an IRA Charitable Rollover or Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) allows you to avoid paying income tax on your distribution, satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD), and make a meaningful difference in the lives of people impacted by Parkinson's disease.

Looking ahead into the new year: QCDs from IRAs will become even more valuable starting in 2026. Transfers made directly to charity will still reduce your required minimum distribution (RMD), lowering taxable income. For those who itemize deductions,

QCDs will also help avoid the impact of a new law that limits part of the charitable contribution deduction.

No matter the size, your gift provides vital programs, education, and support to the PD community, while giving you valuable tax advantages.

To set up your QCD, please contact your IRA custodian or financial advisor.

For more information on ways to give to APDA Iowa, please contact:

**Natasha Winterbottom,**  
Fundraising and Events Manager  
[nwinterbottom@apdaparkinson.org](mailto:nwinterbottom@apdaparkinson.org)  
**515-782-3833**



### APDA Staff and Board of Directors

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**Welcome Stephanie Wilson!** Stephanie serves as the Manager of Programs and Community Engagement for the American Parkinson Disease Association Iowa Chapter. With a background in psychology and gerontology, she brings extensive experience in neurodegenerative disease education and senior living community support. Through her role, she is dedicated to ensuring that every Iowan, no matter where they live, has access to resources, education, and support for Parkinson's disease.

# CARING FOR OUR LOVED ONES WITH PARKINSON'S

by Katie Freeman, MSW



Katie Freeman, MSW is the Manager of Programs and Community Engagement for the Northwest Chapter of the American Parkinson Disease Association. They support Parkinson's caregivers by facilitating support groups,

offering one-on-one consultations, leading educational programs, and providing information and referral services. Below are Katie's answers to a few questions commonly asked by caregivers:

## 1. What do I call myself? Caregiver? Caretaker? Care Partner?

It may seem like semantics, but these terms reflect the relational dynamic and philosophy of care between a person with Parkinson's and the people responsible for their care. Think about the power dynamics implied in the words take versus give versus partner. Taking or giving is something you do to someone while partnering is something you do with someone.

Caregiver is generally considered the most neutral term and can refer to a close family member or a paid professional who cares for a person with Parkinson's. Care Partner is typically reserved for a spouse or family member who partners with their loved one with PD to manage their care. Caretaker has become less popular over the years, but it's often used interchangeably with caregiver.

For some of us, the distinctions between these terms are meaningful and important, while others don't care as much. Just know that there is no right or wrong way to refer to yourself; it's simply a matter of what feels true and genuine for you and your loved one with Parkinson's.

## 2. What does caregiving look like throughout the different stages of PD?

Your doctor may have told you that there are five stages of Parkinson's, based on a staging system created by Drs. Hoehn & Yahr in the 1960s. While it has some flaws, this staging system can help us understand how Parkinson's motor symptoms progress over time. With each stage of Parkinson's, there is a corresponding stage of caregiving. Expect your role as caregiver to evolve over time as Parkinson's symptoms progress and your loved ones' needs change.

## 3. I feel overwhelmed, burnt out, and powerless. How can I motivate myself to keep going?

Caregiving can be a way that we show love, respect, and gratitude to the people in our lives who have Parkinson's. But it can also be challenging work that impacts our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. In those moments when you feel the most overwhelmed and powerless, remind yourself that you have a choice in every situation. Am I going to help this person? Or am I going to walk away? For many of us, the idea of walking away is unthinkable. But the reality is that people choose not to care every day.

Instead of doing that every day, you wake up and choose to care. You choose to help someone who is vulnerable. You choose to ensure that this person is safe and their needs are met. You put your values into action. And I'm so grateful for all of you making that choice.

Once you've gotten through that moment of emotional intensity, the next step is to pick up your phone and ask for help.

#### 4. How do I ask for help?

Caregivers often have the hardest time asking for help. Many of us pride ourselves on our ability to care for others and don't want to admit that we can't do everything. We can often assume that other people won't understand what we're going through or that it's a burden on someone else if we ask for their help. We don't want to interfere with our children's or friends' lives.

However, most of us have people in our lives who want to help but don't know how. Have open and honest conversations with these people about the specific tasks that you need help with or the kind of support you need. Let your friends and family tell you what they are able to offer. Communication is key here on both sides.

Remember that helping out feels good! Just like you find meaning in caring for your loved one with Parkinson's, others will find meaning by helping you. Give your loved ones the opportunity to help. For many, that invitation to help will be a gift and an invitation to be closer to you and your loved ones with Parkinson's.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

*You'll make a real impact while connecting with others who care deeply about helping the Parkinson's community live life to the fullest.*

**Ready to get started?  
Contact us today and find your perfect fit!**



### OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- ♥ Office Assistants
- ♥ Annual Events:
  - Optimism Walk & Conferences
- ♥ Committee Opportunities
- ♥ Support Group Leaders



**Susan Callison, Manager of Programs and Community Engagement**

📞 **515.782.4386**

✉ **scallison@apdaparkinson.org**

**Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.**

2951 86th Street, Suite 125  
Urbandale, Iowa 50322



To go green, give us a call  
at 515-207-6296

Scan Me To Register



REGISTRATION REQUIRED!

**Fort Dodge  
Parkinson's Conference**

A day of expert insights, wellness tools,  
and community connections to  
help you live well with PD!

**Thursday, November 13th: 12:00 - 4:00 pm**  
**St. Paul's Lutheran Church: 400 S 13th Street, Fort Dodge, IA 50501**

## APDA Iowa Chapter

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