



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IRVING MEDICAL CENTER

# PARKINSON NEWSLETTER

Winter 2019

## Helpful Travel Tips

By Elizabeth Delaney, LMSW Social Worker CUIMC Neurology

Traveling to getaway from the cold winter season can be scary. Busy airports and forgotten medications, are a few examples of situations which can make traveling a stressful time. To ease some of this stress, for both holiday travels and future vacations, follow some of these helpful tips provided by Parkinson's Foundation:

**Create a checklist.** Following a good list will help you be prepared and not be over packed.

**Start packing early.** Packing ahead of schedule will allow you to relax and feel less rushed the day you leave.

**Choose comfort over fashion.** Pack comfortable clothes and walking shoes that will allow you to move freely.

**Bring extra meds.** Carry at least a week or more of extra prescription medications and a current prescription for refills. Keep your medications in their original, labeled containers in case you need to go through security or get refills.

**Carry a list of your meds and a doctor's note.** You might want to consider getting a laminated copy of your current medications and a letter from your doctor explaining that you are being treated for Parkinson's disease. A document like this might be helpful in case you have a health issue or need to show airport security.

**Pack your meds in your carry-on bag.** Doing so will help you avoid any chance of being separated from you medication.

**Take water and snacks to go.** Pack some portable fruit like an apple, energy bars and some trail mix. Have water on hand so you can take your pills on time. You might want to pack a collapsible cup (available at most drug stores) so you can get water from water fountains.

**Get an early start.** Heavy traffic and long security lines can leave you feeling pressured. Getting an early start will take the edge off a stressful journey. If you need assistance at any point, do not hesitate to ask. A little help will make your trip go more smoothly.

**Take your meds.** When traveling, it is so easy to overlook a medication dose. Do your best to follow your medication schedule.

**Make things easy.** If flying ask for handicap assistance, consider a non-stop flight and an aisle seat close to the restroom. In your hotel you should ask for a handicap room in the first floor.

**Enjoy yourself.** Traveling with Parkinson's can be an enjoyable experience, or a real drudgery. Following these tips will help make your next trip a rejuvenating adventure.

More tips found at: <https://www.parkinson.org/Living-with-Parkinsons/Managing-Parkinsons/Advice-for-the-Newly-Diagnosed/Traveling-with-Parkinsons>



## Support Groups!

### PD Patient Support Group.

Meets the last Tuesday of every month. For more information and to register please contact Elizabeth Delaney, LMSW at 212-305-5779.

### NEW Caregiver Support Group.

Meets the first Wednesday of every month. For more information and to register please contact Elizabeth Delaney, LMSW at 212-305-5779.

### Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) support group.

For information regarding the next DBS meeting, please contact Linda Winfield, RN at 212-305-1303.

### PD 201: Managing the Middle Stages

PD Educational Talk

*When:* January 15, 2020

5:30-7:30PM

*Where:* 54 Nagle Ave, NY NY

*What:* educational session for people with PD and their families (middle staged: 1-2+ years on medications)

For more information or to register, please visit

[columbiapd201.eventbrite.com](http://columbiapd201.eventbrite.com)

Or call Elizabeth at 212-305-5779

## Center Spotlight! : A New Study on Cognitive Aspects of Parkinson's Disease (PD)

### What is this study?

We are doing this study to better understand how PD affects cognitive processes. PD is caused by the loss of dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra (SN), a part of the midbrain. The lack of dopamine affects parts of the brain involved in the initiation of movement, but we also think that it affects cognitive abilities such as decision-making, working memory, and learning. Our initial data collection suggests that performance in these tasks is affected by PD. We now want to look further to find out how PD causes these changes and does dopaminergic treatment improve performance in these cognitive processes.

### Why is this important?

PD can affect cognition very early on, and patients can be not aware of it. Therefore, finding techniques that can detect these changes could help us to find a behavioral biomarker for PD. This biomarker can tell us about the presence of the disease before motor symptoms begin, how the disease affects cognitive function over time, and how it interacts with the dopaminergic medication.

### What is involved?

This study will recruit individuals with Parkinson's Disease. Participating in this study will include up to 2 visits that can be from 1 day to 7 days apart and each lasts 2 h. In one visit, participants need to be off their medications. Participants will fill brief questionnaires, perform computerized cognitive tasks testing memory, decision-making, and learning abilities, and be neurologically examined.

### Who can participate?

If you are between 50-75, have no significant neurological disease besides PD and no significant psychiatric illness in the past, at least have been on treatment with dopaminergic medication for 6 months.

### Who is the study sponsor?

The United States National Institute of Health and Columbia University.

### For more information, contact:

If you are interested in participating or want to learn more, contact **Leila Montaser Kouhsari, MD, PhD at [lm3386@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:lm3386@cumc.columbia.edu)**

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### **Make a Gift--Make a Difference**

Thinking about your year-end charitable giving? Donate appreciated stock to support the Movement Disorders Division's important mission while reducing your tax liabilities.

Please contact Matt Reals to learn how your tax-deductible charitable donation can help our dedicated faculty provide the highest caliber of compassionate care, conduct groundbreaking research, and educate future leaders in the field.

**Phone—212-304-7203**

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## The Doctor Is In

**Q&A with Katrina Long, EdD,MS,OTR/L**

*Occupational Therapist*

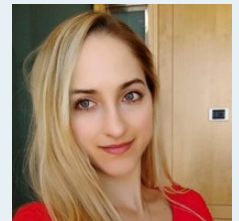
**Q: Often times traveling involves a lot of walking, and crowds. I tend to freeze during these times. What are some tips/tricks to help overcome this?**

**A:** Freezing of gait can be triggered for a number of reasons, and the cause can vary from person to person. Traveling can be one of those triggers because of the stress, crowds (and unexpected movements), as well as the demands of having to frequently multi-task. People with Parkinson's Disease may require more conscious attention to move. Often, when a freeze first occurs, we recommend that you slow down, and try not to fight the freeze. In this instance, try to stop in place, relax yourself, and reset your movement goal. Next, we recommend you try a cueing strategy. You may need to explore various types of cues to find which one works best for you. Some people benefit from auditory cues such as reciting "1-2-3-go," or humming a tune to step with the rhythm or count. Others may benefit more from visualizing an object such as a log or horizontal line to step over. Laser lights that project a horizontal line onto the floor are helpful visual cues as well. Laser lights can be handheld or built-into walkers and canes.

Finally, an important tip is to maintain a positive attitude and reduce stress as negativity and stress can affect your movement and freezing. When traveling, remain optimistic and stay confident! For individualized help and training, ask your physical or occupational therapist on how you can practice incorporating these cueing strategies into your daily routine to reduce freezing of gait overall.

If you have a question regarding Parkinson's and its treatment that you would like featured in the next newsletter, please e-mail your question to Elizabeth Delaney, LMSW at [movementdisorders@columbia.edu](mailto:movementdisorders@columbia.edu)

The information published in this newsletter is not intended to replace, and should not be interpreted or relied upon, as professional advice, whether medical or otherwise. Please refer to your own professional for all advice



*"Don't count the days, make the days count."*

***-Muhammad Ali, diagnosed with PD in 1984***