

Parkinson's Disease

First described as ``shaking palsy'' the disease that now bears his name, medical science has thus far been unable to unravel the cause or causes of most Parkinson's cases or to devise a cure. Nonetheless, dramatic progress has been made in treating the disease, which is known to afflict about half a million older Americans, or one person in 100 over age 50. This figure does not include the untold thousands with symptoms of the disease that are not severe enough to prompt them to seek a diagnosis. But early diagnosis is important.

Diagnosis of Parkinson's disease is based on the patient's symptoms and performance on certain neurological and neuropsychological tests, along with ruling out other possible causes of those symptoms. Some cases of what doctors call Parkinsonism are caused by potent drugs used in the treatment of schizophrenia and other psychiatric illnesses or they are a result of poisoning by manganese.

Through medication, exercise regimens and tips on adaptive living measures, modern treatment can forestall or reduce the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, allowing patients to lead full and active lives for years after diagnosis and often for the rest of their lives because most of its victims are elderly. The late stages of the disease, however, can leave patients vulnerable to pneumonia, blood clots and bodywide infections that can be fatal.

Yoga has a major role in management of Parkinson's as it has emerged as a beneficial alternative therapy and an ideal form of exercise for Parkinson's patients because of its slow movements. Following the steps mentioned below could effectively help people with Parkinson's:

Concentrate on controlling your breath (Pranayama) as this form of yoga helps in moments of panic - such as feet sticking to the floor when walking.

In this form of yoga, the mind is always alert.

Few yoga exercises like back strengthening postures, lots of shoulder movements, breathing practices and some meditation definitely helps.

One of the most useful forms of yoga used for Parkinson's is Ashtanga Yoga. It works to strengthen the body and do increases blood circulation.

Daily practice of yoga is essential since Parkinson's itself does not necessarily weaken the muscles. Weakening of muscles is generally caused by lack of movement. Daily practice should be encouraged, but not enough to cause

fatigue.

Parkinson's also result in the loss of movement of the facial muscles. Pranayama and other yoga movements could help in relaxing those muscles and bring in smile on the faces of the patient.