



August 2025

Dear Members,

It is time to renew your membership to our Association. Your committee has decided to increase the annual membership fee to \$25 per member or member and partner. The additional fee is due to the increase in insurance, rental and other fees required to be paid to see our Association continue operations. Please pay the fee by direct credit to:

Great Southern bank

BSB 814 282

Account number **51215824**

Account in the name of -

Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Parkinson's Association Inc.

Please ensure you include your name when making the deposit.

Unfortunately, our bank no longer accepts cheque deposits, therefore, if you cannot pay by direct debit, please hand in cash to one of our committee members.

As mentioned, the overall costs to run all activities have increased. Donations to our Association are fully tax deductible and if anyone can help it would be greatly appreciated. Also, if you know of a person or business that may like to sponsor our Association or one of our activities such as our exercise class or choir, please let us know. **LAST MEETING**

33 members attended our last meeting to listen to Keith Kennedy give a very informative talk about Captain Cook and The Endeavour. Keith has been involved with the Australian National Maritime Museum for many years and certainly provided an expert overview of Captain Cook's travels and his ship. I certainly learned a lot from Keith's presentation, and he received a warm response for his talk.

NEXT MEETING

Angela Hogan, a much-lauded Mezzo Soprano, has agreed to perform at our meeting on Friday the 1st of August at Mount Colah Community Centre from 10.00am until 12 noon. The cost to attend will be \$20 per head and as usual a wonderful morning tea is included in this price.

Angela will sing a range of songs from opera to musical comedy and jazz. I am reliably informed that songs from Les Mis and Phantom of The Opera will be

included in the Angela's program.

Bring your family and friends to this wonderful event but make sure you book early because seats are limited, and this is a value for money performance.

Please RSVP on 0412 346 301 for catering purposes.

A VERY SPECIAL APPEAL.

Our AGM will be held in October and we are looking for new people to join our committee. Dick Babb who has held a committee position for over 25 years is not re-standing this year and we urgently need someone to takeover as Treasurer. Dick will mentor anyone who agrees to take over the Treasurer's role.

Our President Rose would also like to retire.

Please do we have any members or family or friends who can help fill these positions!!!!

WEB SITES TO VISIT

The Davis Phinney Foundation are holding a special webinar about mental health for Carers to register go to

communications@davisphinneyfoundation.org. If you want to sing and exercise at home go to - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKkGoUYruEo>

Two other websites worth a visit –

news@shakeitup.org.au and <https://www.parkinsonsnsw.org.au> which has some excellent information.

Don't forget our own website where you can read the latest newsletter as well as see copies of previous ones. –

Parkypeople.org.



How To Manage Difficulty Swallowing in Parkinson's

Medically reviewed by Evelyn O. Berman, M.D. Written by Sarah Winfrey

Updated on April 20, 2022

Key Takeaways

Parkinson's disease can cause difficulty chewing and swallowing, which may lead to serious health complications like dehydration, malnutrition, and breathing problems.

Parkinson's disease can cause a person to have **difficulty chewing and swallowing**. This can have many effects on their health and quality of life. They

can develop dry mouth, dehydration, or malnutrition. They can also inhale food, liquid, or saliva into their windpipe, which can be frightening. As one [MyParkinsonsTeam](#) member shared, “I recently started choking on my own spit, and for the first time ever, I got really scared because I couldn’t get any air.” Difficulty swallowing ([dysphagia](#)) can be a challenging [symptom of Parkinson’s](#). The good news is that it [can be treated](#). Here’s what you need to know about this symptom, including why it happens and how it can be managed.

How Do People Experience Difficulty Swallowing with Parkinson’s?

Many people diagnosed with Parkinson’s experience difficulties swallowing at some point while living with the condition. Dysphagia can [occur at any point](#) over the course of the disease, even during the early stages. As one member wrote, “I have trouble swallowing now. This is new to me — it’s only been a problem over this last week. It makes it hard to swallow my meds.”

Having trouble swallowing can cause many other problems, depending on why a person struggles to swallow and how severe their dysphagia is. Many people find that they [drool or can’t keep food and drinks](#) in their mouths. Others find themselves sputtering, choking, or dealing with a sore throat during or after meals. Some may not even realize there is a problem until they start [losing weight](#) without trying.

Some people with dysphagia start to [avoid certain foods](#) or drink fewer liquids when swallowing becomes difficult. Over long periods of time, this can lead to other problems. As one member observed, “My husband has had the same swallowing problems and was losing way too much weight.”

Why Does Parkinson’s Cause Difficulty Swallowing?

Swallowing involves the [coordination](#) of many complex muscle movements in the mouth and neck. Changes that lead to problems with swallowing can occur anywhere along the upper digestive tract, from the mouth to the esophagus.

In Parkinson’s, swallowing difficulties can be caused by the loss of dopamine neurons in [different parts of the brain](#). If they are lost in the substantia nigra region in the midbrain, the problem is considered a motor symptom. However, losing dopamine neurons in the lower brain stem or the cortex can cause issues with coordination. This is considered a non-motor difficulty because the problem is with the coordination itself and not with the way the muscles are functioning.

The Risks Associated with Difficulty Swallowing

Many risks are associated with swallowing problems. [Unintended weight loss](#) is common, as having problems swallowing may make a person less inclined to eat. Long-term dysphagia can also deprive a person of nutrients, leading to malnutrition.

[Aspiration pneumonia](#) is another potential problem. When swallowing is difficult, people can end up inhaling liquid, food particles, or saliva in their lungs. Since the lungs cannot get rid of these substances easily, an infection can develop. Sometimes, these infections can lead to significant illnesses like [aspiration pneumonia](#).

Manage Swallowing Problems with Parkinson's

You can do many things to manage swallowing problems associated with Parkinson's. As the [Parkinson's Foundation](#) notes, the first step to treating dysphagia is telling your neurologist about the problem. They can refer you to a specialist, known as a speech-language pathologist (SLP), for treatment.

The SLP will begin by asking you about the swallowing difficulties you've been experiencing. They will evaluate your symptoms and medical history. In most cases, they will order a video X-ray or an endoscopy to see how your swallowing muscles are functioning as you eat and drink.

After identifying the cause of your swallowing problems, the SLP will recommend one or more approaches to help you start swallowing and drinking as normally as possible. Some interventions may work for some people [but not for others](#). You may have to try several before you find one that improves your swallowing.

Treating Parkinson's with Medication.

Managing dysphagia often begins with treating the underlying cause. In swallowing problems caused by Parkinson's, this can mean treating Parkinson's with medication.

Many medications are available for people diagnosed with Parkinson's. For example, [levodopa](#) helps ease stiff muscles and slow movements. As with most drugs, you might experience some side effects while taking levodopa. These can include constipation, dizziness, insomnia, and anxiety. If you experience any of these side effects while taking levodopa, let your health care provider know right away.

Finding the best drug treatment for your Parkinson's [might also improve](#) your swallowing function. Swallowing problems [don't go away for everyone](#) taking Parkinson's medication, but there's a good chance that you will see at least some improvement.

Getting a Swallow Test

Some doctors, clinicians, and SLPs can administer a [swallowing test](#) or perform a swallowing study. [These tests](#), as well as symptom questionnaires, can help indicate whether you are having problems swallowing and pinpoint where the dysfunction is occurring. After these procedures, doctors and speech specialists can target a person's treatments so that they address the unique problems contributing to their dysphagia.

Some MyParkinsonsTeam members recommend these tests to anyone who struggles with swallowing. One member told another, "Please ask your doctor to order a barium swallow test to determine why you have difficulty swallowing."

Another explained, "Your doctor may do a 'swallow test' on you, even if you've already had one, to see if things are worsening."

Working with a Speech-Language Pathologist

Certain types of speech and language interventions may help improve your swallowing. [Lee Silverman Voice Treatment \(LSVT\)](#) is one type of treatment that seems to help people diagnosed with Parkinson's swallow better. This approach helps you isolate certain muscles in the swallowing process and learn to strengthen or better control them while eating or drinking. Think of it as muscle strength training for swallowing.

Some of our members have had great success with this treatment. One shared their experience: "I finally found a great speech therapist in my area who is well-trained in LSVT. I've worked with her for two years. She has me 80 percent to 90 percent better. It works, but it does take discipline doing daily exercises and not giving up!"

Changing How You Eat and Drink

There are a number of changes that you can make to how you eat and drink that may make swallowing easier. These include:

- Taking small sips of drinks and small bites of food
- Changing the thickness or texture of the foods you eat

- Eating and drinking when your medication is most effective, rather than right after you take it or when it wears off
- Sitting up as straight as possible when drinking and eating
- Reducing distractions, like conversations, during mealtimes
- Making sure you swallow saliva regularly to control excess saliva or drooling
- Focusing on keeping your mouth closed while eating and drinking



JOIN OUR CHOIR- An extra added by Dick

Studies have shown that **singing offers an engaging way to enhance voice and communication** for people living with mild to moderately severe Parkinson's it also helps with swallowing.

THOUGHT OF MONTH

"Believe you can and you're halfway there." - Theodore Roosevelt.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

two men sitting on a park bench and one says to the other "Would you rather get Parkinson's or Alzheimer's". The friend quickly responds, "Parkinson's it is better to spill a little scotch rather than forget where the bottle is".

Dick and the Team



Terri's Tips



Instead of giving you instructions on how to do carry out task on your mobile, I thought we would look at a new tool/app that is revolutionising how we are interacting with our mobile devices and computers in general!

Meet ChatGPT: Your Friendly Digital Helper

Have you ever wished you had someone who could answer your questions, help you write a letter, or even suggest a new recipe — any time of day? Let us introduce you to **ChatGPT**, a helpful computer program that acts like a conversation partner, ready to assist you with everyday tasks. But don't worry — you don't need to be a tech wizard to use it!





What Is ChatGPT?

Think of ChatGPT like a friendly librarian or neighbour who's always available to talk. It's not a real person, but it's designed to understand your questions and respond in plain language.

You type something in — like "**What's a good soup recipe for two?**" — and it gives you a thoughtful answer. You can also ask it to help you write birthday cards, remember historical facts, explain news stories, or suggest books or movies.

Why Should You Try It?

Here are just a few reasons seniors are enjoying ChatGPT:

-  **Instant answers** – No more digging through websites. Just ask!
-  **No judgment** – You can ask anything, big or small, and it won't ever roll its eyes.
-  **Free and easy to use** – Just type a message, and it replies.
-  **Helps you stay sharp** – Chatting with it keeps your mind engaged and curious.

What Can You Ask ChatGPT?

Here are a few simple ideas to get started:

1. **Ask a question**
"Who was the oldest Australian president?"
"What are the benefits of walking daily?"
2. **Plan your day**
"Give me 3 easy exercises I can do indoors."
3. **Write something together**

"Help me write a thank-you note to my grandson."

"Can you write a poem about turning 80?"

4. **Reminisce**

"What happened in 1965?"





"Tell me about music from the 50s."

5. **Learn something new**

"What is tai chi?"

"Explain how email works in simple terms."

Tips for Getting Comfortable

-  **Just talk naturally.** There's no special wording or format.
-  **Take your time.** You don't need to rush.
-  **Be curious.** There are no silly questions.
-  **Try again if needed.** Didn't like an answer? Ask it a different way.

Ready to Try?

If you're feeling a little unsure — that's okay! The best way to learn is to try. Even if you just say, **"Hello, ChatGPT. What can you do?"** — that's a great first step.

In the next blog, we'll show you **how to ask ChatGPT to write a letter, find simple recipes, or even play a word game with you.**

So go ahead — say hi to your new digital friend. ChatGPT is here for you, one friendly chat at a time.

Let me know if you'd like a printable handout version, visuals, or a step-by-step tutorial to go with this. I can also help create follow-up posts with beginner-friendly tasks.

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