

Parkinson's disease: medication options

Use this decision aid to help you and your healthcare professional talk about how best to treat your early stage Parkinson's disease. Parkinson's disease causes stiffness, shaking, tremors, slowed movements and other problems.

Frequently Asked Questions ↓	Levodopa (L-DOPA)	Dopamine agonist (enhancer)
What does this treatment involve?	Taking one levodopa pill 3 or 4 times a day. Avoid taking levodopa at the same time as food, especially high-protein foods like meat or dairy products.	Options are: • Immediate release pills: taking one pill 3 times a day • Slow-release pills: taking one pill a day • Skin patches: wearing one patch a day
Will this treatment help with my symptoms?	Levodopa improves mobility more than dopamine agonists. Levodopa probably helps improve symptoms that are not related to mobility.	Dopamine agonists do not work as well as levodopa at improving mobility. Dopamine agonists probably help improve symptoms that are not related to mobility.
What are the chances of developing involuntary movements?	51 out of every 100 people (51%) taking levodopa develop involuntary movements in the first 5 years. This is because the effect of the medication 'wears off' over time.	22 out of every 100 people (22%) taking dopamine agonists develop involuntary movements in the first five years. This is because the effect of the medication 'wears off' over time.
What are the chances of developing impulsive behaviors, like overdoing gambling, eating, sex or shopping?	About 7 out of every 100 people (7%) taking levodopa develop impulsive behaviors. Impulsive behaviors are more likely in older people and people with dementia. Behaviors usually stop when medication is stopped.	About 14 out of every 100 people (14%) taking dopamine agonists develop impulsive behaviors. Impulsive behaviors are more likely in older people and people with dementia. Behaviors usually stop when medication is stopped.
What other side effects are possible?	About 28 out of every 100 people (28%) experience nausea, usually when first starting levodopa. This problem can be treated. About 15 out of every 100 people (15%) experience dizziness. About 9 out of every 100 people (9%) are sleepy during the day.	About 30 out of every 100 people (30%) experience nausea, usually when first starting a dopamine agonist. This problem can be treated. About 17 out of every 100 people (17%) experience dizziness. About 27 out of every 100 people (27%) are sleepy during the day.
Will I need more treatment in the future?	You will likely need higher doses of levodopa as time goes on. You may want to consider other medications, brain surgery or medications given by a pump in the future.	You will likely need to start taking levodopa after a few years. You may want to consider other medications, brain surgery or medications given by a pump in the future.

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