

Parkinson's Disease



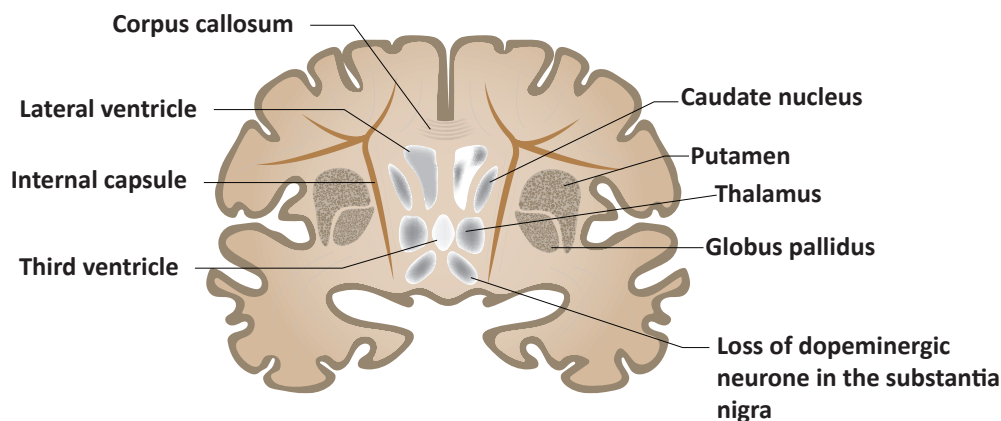
What is it?

Parkinson's disease is a disorder of the brain that is characterised by the breakdown and loss of neurons. The neurons that die off are responsible for producing dopamine, a chemical in the brain that is responsible for body movement and co-ordination. Parkinson's disease can occur at any age, but the average age of onset is around 60 years old.

Symptoms

-  **Reduced arm swinging**
-  **Rigidity and trembling of head**
-  **Rigidity and trembling of extremities**
-  **Shuffling gait with short steps**
-  **Forward tilt of trunk**

PARKINSON'S DISEASE BRAIN



Diagnosis



Symptoms of the patient



Physical examination by doctor

Causes

Unknown causes



Familial factor



Prolonged exposure to toxins such as insecticides, herbicides and fungicides



Complications

Difficulty performing daily activities

Injuries from fall

Side effects of medications

Difficulty swallowing or eating

Disabilities

TREATMENT

- There is **no known cure** for Parkinson's disease.
- **Medication** to control symptoms.
- **Surgery** (to ease the symptoms) – insertion of a brain stimulator, only in very severe cases where patients do not respond to medication.

Management



Good general nutrition and health – make changes in diet if there are swallowing problems



High fibre diet to relieve symptoms of constipation



Exercising – use caution when walking, and look in front rather than looking down



Avoid stress



Physical therapy, speech and occupational therapy



Railings or banisters in areas of the house



Regular rest periods



Assistive devices such as wheelchairs, bed lifts, walkers and wall bars



Take medication regularly and never stop or change medication without consulting the doctor