



TIPS

for Dealing With Impulse-Control Behaviors in Parkinson's Disease

Impulsive and compulsive behaviors have been identified in patients with Parkinson's disease who are taking certain dopaminergic medicines. These behaviors can include an increase in risk-taking activities such as compulsive gambling, compulsive shopping, binge eating, overspending, or hypersexuality. Be aware of this side effect and possible change in behavior.

Know the facts. You are more likely to experience impulsive and compulsive behavior if you are a smoker, male, single, live alone, have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at an early age, and have a personal or family history of addictive behavior.

Be aware of how you feel. Notice changes in behavior that are unusual for you. Also take note of any behavior that leads to a sense of loss of control or interferes with your normal daily activities.

Reach out for support. Speak with family members about what you are experiencing. If you feel that you need additional support, consider talking to a therapist. Behavioral strategies may be explored and implemented.

Seek alternative treatment options. Impulsive and compulsive behaviors can be controlled. One strategy may involve reducing your daily dose of Parkinson's disease medication. Never stop taking or change your drugs without seeking the advice of your health care professional.

Consider possible outcomes. If left unchecked, impulsive and compulsive behaviors can result in negative consequences such as excessive weight gain, social and relationship difficulties, financial loss, and a host of other undesirable outcomes.

Get to the heart of the matter. This behavior may be embarrassing, and you may feel uneasy about talking to a health care professional about it. Chances are that your health care provider will have spoken to others with similar issues.

Beat the odds. Just as the signs and symptoms of Parkinson's disease vary from person to person, so do one's chances of having impulsive and compulsive side effects from taking medicine for Parkinson's disease. This is exactly the reason why you should keep taking your medication as directed.

Put everything into perspective. Keep in mind that the symptoms from taking Parkinson's disease medication are not your fault and do not reflect a personal flaw. Rather, they are related to an alteration in your brain chemistry.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

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