

# 7 Steps to Fight Parkinson's Disease

By  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JJ Flentke has been one of the most sought after Physical Therapists for more than 25 years by people who want and need effective physical therapy as they face the challenges of aging, and for many years she worked with seniors in their home with a focus to help them stay in their home. JJ has devoted the last 15 years to understanding neurological and balance/vestibular challenges in the aging population. She and her team will help you maintain your independence whether that means traveling the world or staying in your own home and avoiding the assisted living facility.



When JJ opened Boomerang Therapy Works in Vancouver it's every detail was designed with YOU in mind. From the open design, the equipment, the atmosphere and color, to the staff, everyone and everything speaks to the goal of keeping her patients at their best. She wanted a lot of windows for better lighting, plants to optimize the air quality, and a gym like atmosphere that exudes health. At Boomerang you are dealing with a chronic condition, A-G-E, in a healthy environment. You are NOT BROKEN. As a result, JJ has quickly become the authority, sought after by patients who come because their doctors, their families and their peers are all saying, go to Boomerang Therapy Works! Boomerang will help you thrive!

# Introduction

If you are reading this your or someone you love has Parkinson's Disease (PD). You may be newly diagnosed, or maybe you've known for years. In either case, there is much work to be done and we want to empower you! Because PD is a chronic disease, the symptoms of which are going to present themselves, now and later, you will need to be vigilant and work hard. This is a marathon, not a sprint! The good news is that vigilance and hard work will (it has been proven) be your best defense against the symptoms of PD.

Unfortunately for many, the understanding and knowledge necessary to accomplish this work comes in bits and pieces and is often confusing. That is why I have written this report. Consider it your valuable ammunition for the fight.

The 7 recommendations I make here are meant to help you in your fight against this chronic illness. If you implement these methods into your daily life, I believe you will feel better, function with greater ease, and you will know that you are doing everything you can in your fight to win against PD.

If you follow the 7 recommendations you will see the benefits, and I want you to know that my team and myself are here to help you, if you want. You are always welcome at Boomerang Therapy Works, and we have many, many ways to assist and guide you on your journey. We are only a phone call away.

To your health, JJ

# 1. Timing is Everything

Carbidopa/Levodopa and Sinemet absorption may be inhibited by protein. It is best to take Carbidopa/Levodopa an hour before or after eating protein. Protein is normally found in meat and fish but we also find protein in nut butters (like peanut butter) and dairy products as well. Your takeaway? To get the most benefits from your medications, timing is everything. Taking your meds and eating protein rich meals at least an hour apart assures you will get the best results.

A high-fat meal takes even longer to clear the stomach. Fat is digested very slowly compared to carbohydrates and protein. If Sinemet is taken with a high-fat meal, it is further delayed in clearing the stomach. Think of your medication as swimmers... they can swim through water, or they can swim through Jell-O, but we know that swimming through Jell-O isn't an efficient way to swim.

Your takeaway? Time your meds so that you're taking them on an empty stomach or with a small meal that is low in proteins and fats, to optimize the effectiveness.

# 2. Exercise is Medicine

For people with Parkinson's disease, exercise is more than just a workout—it's a vital component to maximizing your function, and minimizing your symptoms. There is a substantial body of research revealing the importance of endurance, balance, strengthening and stretching exercises to optimize your quality of life, so you can GO to a concert,

PLAY with your grandkids, TRAVEL to your family reunion... do the things YOU LOVE.

Your takeaway? A daily exercise routine, tailored to your function and your specific symptoms, will prove an essential activity in your fight against the PROGRESSION of PD, which is something that medications cannot do. Exercise WILL improve your overall health, your blood pressure, cholesterol, flexibility and weight... all added benefits for your health. Please have a Parkinson's disease specific therapist prescribe your exercise routine, it is important that it is targeted and specific to your symptoms.

An even more compelling reason to exercise is that exercise improves brain function... and it is your brain that is under attack by Parkinson's. When you are exercising you take the fight where it matters most.

### **3. Fuel Baby Fuel**

Just as exercise is essential, you have an opportunity to further improve your outlook by selecting a diet that will contribute to your overall health and one that will improve brain function. Here are some steps to take:

Minimize Inflammation: Like everything else: more fruit, veggies, fatty fish, nuts, whole grains, beans and less processed foods, sugars (especially high fructose corn syrup), processed meats like hot dogs and dairy products such as whole milk, cheese, and ice cream, deep fried foods like french fries or fried chicken, processed grains, and trans fats

Anti-oxidants help reduce cell damage in the brain that are caused by free radicals. Some evidence suggests that anti-oxidants may even reduce the risk of Parkinson's and support overall brain health.

Probiotics: Research shows that the gut and brain are connected, a partnership called the gut-brain axis. The two are linked through biochemical signaling between the nervous system and digestive tract, called the enteric nervous system, and the central nervous system, which includes the brain. The neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers between nerves are the same in the gut and the brain. Have you ever felt anxiety in the pit of your stomach, that is real and due to these messengers. So again, we are what we eat. There is research that has found that probiotics may help increase serotonin and dopamine and thus boost mood and cognitive function and lower stress and anxiety. Probiotics are found in yogurt, kefir, and kombucha. I am a big fan of Happy Mountain Kombucha Peach Blossom but they do add a little sugar...

Healthy Fats: These are the fats from olive oil, fatty fish, and nuts. These help reduce high blood pressure and improve cholesterol and thus improve heart health and blood flow to the brain!

## **4. Build A Great Team**

Parkinson's effects nearly every aspect of your life... in one way or another. It is imperative that you have a complete team of professionals who are aware of and following your progress.

First– You are the captain of your team, you pick the players and you lead. The members of your team will follow your lead.

Start with your Neurologist... pick a Movement Disorder Specialist if one is available. They have the most complete insight into the medications and interventions available for treating PD.

Add your Physical Therapist (PT)... again find a specialist in Parkinson's Disease. Establish a long-term relationship so that your PT knows you well and one who test your function at least 2-3 times a year to catch any changes sooner rather than later. PTs who specialize in movement disorders can provide one on one exercise training and education which is imperative for people with PD. Not just any exercise will do.

PD decrease the size of your movements. Are there days when putting on a shirt becomes a problem? You think you're reaching far enough but you aren't. Your fine motor movements are affected too, unbuttoning your shirt becomes impossible. Physical therapy can help!

Keep it up... adding a personal trainer and/or exercise classes is proven way of keeping yourself motivated and involved. Research shows that you need one on one with a personal trainer (under the guidance of your PT) to modulate the size and speed of your movements, and the social support of group workouts to provide motivation and accountability. The key to slowing the progression of PD is Forced Induced Intensity; this is very difficult, if not impossible for you to do on your own.

Nutrition is also important. If you can add a Nutritionist to your team... fabulous. If not, your PT may be able to provide guidance in this area. What you eat and when you eat are key factors in creating the optimal environment for fighting your disease. Nutrition and exercise combined create an amazing 1-2 punch!

Finding a PD support group for yourself, and one for your family/ caretakers helps in immeasurable ways. Meeting others who are fighting PD will help you understand what is happening, and will allow you to share your experiences as well. Knowledge is so powerful, and support groups are often the perfect place to seek comfort, understanding and knowledge that you won't necessarily get from the professionals. No PD groups available? Consider your church group, family and friends, library reading groups... There is a strong link between social support and brain function.

## **5. Sooner Really is Better than Later**

Whether you have early onset PD or have been coping for years, exercise really is medicine when it comes to Parkinson's. It is imperative that you push your aerobic exercise and then depending on your symptoms, you will need to work on amplitude, speed, agility and cognition so that your exercise is targeting your specific challenges with PD. I know that making decisions is difficult, I have struggled myself trying to decide if I should try acupuncture, but for some reason I have not struggled to purchase expensive medication prescribe by my physician. You may be



Struggling with making decisions to seek Physical Therapy but the research is not misleading you. I am not misleading you; you need to exercise and you needed to start yesterday.

## **6. All Systems Go!**

Parkinson's slows your muscles, and with it comes constipation. This is a huge challenge and there are many ways to fight it.

Fiber is your friend.. Increasing fiber intake always helps.

Smooth Move Tea... it really works and can be found in most grocery stores or at Boomerang Therapy Works.

Exercise is medicine... exercise really is your go-to choice for keeping your body healthy and running smoothly. Without a doubt it will help with constipation.

## **7. Get the Right Tools for the Job**

See our report on the 7 best tools to keep you in your home. When I was pregnant with twins, a mother of twins said to me "If you can solve it with money, solve it with money." This was one of the most helpful mantras for me and helped me solve many silly and crazy dilemmas. The right tools can make so many things easier and safer.

# How Can Boomerang Help?

## 1. Physical Therapy

Here at Boomerang, we are neurologic experts. Our physical therapists can help you get stronger, have better balance, improve your energy, and create a regular exercise routine tailored to your needs.

## 2. Occupational Therapy

Our occupational therapist is available to problem solve ways to make your routine easier and save energy. They can also provide input on equipment choices or technology to continue to support you.

## 3. Massage

We have a great massage specialist who can help ease the aches and pains that come from tight muscles!

## 4. Counseling

Boomerang has a counselor who you could meet with if you are struggling and need to talk .

## 5. A Caring Closet—[www.acaringcloset.org](http://www.acaringcloset.org)

A Caring Closet is located next door. This non-profit recycles gently used medical equipment for free to those who need it. You do not have to fill out lengthy forms, just a liability waiver. It's easy, simple and free.

# Boomerang Therapy Works

## Location

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We are located in downtown Vancouver just 2 blocks south of Esther Short Park.

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If you have further questions, concerns or just want to speak to someone, call or email us. We are here for you.

# EXERCISE IS MEDICINE