

Glossary of Parkinson's Disease Terms (N - Z):

Neupro (rotigotine): A dopamine agonist, this drug is approved for those with Parkinson's disease and restless legs syndrome. It comes in the form of a skin patch.

Neuroleptic drugs: (Also called major tranquilizers.) A group of drugs which block dopamine. These medications are used in the treatment of serious psychiatric conditions, but can produce or aggravate symptoms of Parkinson's disease. These drugs include Haldol, Compazine, Stelazine, and Thorazine.

Neurotransmitter: A specialized chemical produced in nerve cells that permits the transmission of information between nerve cells. Dopamine is one example.

Nigrostriatal degeneration: Degeneration or destruction of the nerve pathways from the part of the brain called the substantia nigra to the basal ganglia or striatum. These pathways are normally rich in dopamine and are affected in Parkinson's disease.

Norepinephrine (Noradrenalin): Chemical transmitter found in the brain.

On-off effect: Fluctuations that occur in response to levodopa treatment in which the person's mobility changes suddenly and unpredictably from a good response (on) to a poor response (off).

Orthostatic hypotension: A drop in blood pressure during changes in body position (for example, from sitting to standing). This can produce dizziness or lightheadedness.

Palilalia: A symptom of Parkinson's disease, in which a word or syllable is repeated and the flow of speech is interrupted.

Pallidectomy: A surgical procedure where the globus pallidus, a structure deep in the brain that is affected by Parkinson's disease, is removed to improve tremors, rigidity, and bradykinesia. This type of surgery is rarely recommended and has been replaced by deep brain stimulation (DBS).

Paraesthesia: Sensations, usually unpleasant, arising spontaneously in a limb or other part of the body, experienced as "pins and needles" or fluctuations of warmth or coldness.

Parkinson's facies: A stoic, mask-like facial expression, with infrequent blinking; it is characteristic of Parkinson's disease.

Parkinsonism: A group of symptoms that include tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia, stooped posture, and shuffling gait. The more common causes of Parkinsonism are Parkinson's disease, striatonigral degeneration, and a reversible condition induced by certain drugs.

Postural instability: Difficulty with balance.

Postural tremor: Tremor that increases when hands are stretched out in front.

Prolopa: A drug used to treat Parkinson's. It is composed of levodopa and benserazide.

Propulsive gait: Disturbance of gait typical of people with symptoms of Parkinson's in which, during walking, steps become faster and faster with progressively shorter steps that passes from a walking to a running pace and may precipitate falling forward.

Receptor: A structure located on the nerve cell that receives the chemical messenger (neurotransmitter, such as dopamine) sent from an adjacent nerve cell. This is how nerve cells communicate. Most of the drugs used to treat Parkinson's disease are designed to interact with nerve cell receptors and improve nerve cell communication.

Resting tremor: Shaking that occurs in a relaxed and supported limb.

Retropulsive gait: Walking that is propelled backwards.

Rigidity: Muscular stiffness that is common in people with Parkinson's disease. It is characterized by a resistance to movement in the limbs.

Requip (ropinirole): A new drug used to treat Parkinson's. It works by increasing the amount of dopamine available in the brain.

Seborrhoea: Increased oily secretions from the sweat glands of the skin; occurs often in those with Parkinson's disease.

Seborrhoeic dermatitis: Inflammation of the skin sometimes associated with seborrhoea.

Sialorrhea: Drooling.

Sinemet: Trade name for the Parkinson's disease drug that is a mixture of levodopa and carbidopa.

Sinemet CR: A version of Sinemet that works for a longer period of time as it releases the drug more slowly into the body.

Stereotactic surgery: Surgical technique that involves placing a small electrode in an area of the brain to destroy a tiny amount of brain tissue (see deep brain stimulation).

Striatum: The part of the basal ganglia (a structure located deep in the brain) controlling movement, balance, and walking.

Sustention or postural tremor: Tremor that increases when hands are stretched out in front.

Symmetrel (Amantadine): A drug that releases the nerve chemical messenger dopamine and is useful in treating Parkinson's.

Tardive dyskinesia: This condition is a common side effect of long-term use of medications such as chlorpromazine, Haldol, and Loxapine. People with this condition have the characteristic abnormal, involuntary snake-like movements usually of the face and mouth or arms.

Thalamus: A large group of brain cells centrally placed deep in the brain near its base and serving as a major relay station for impulses traveling from the spinal cord and cerebellum to the cerebral cortex.

Tremor: Rhythmic shaking and involuntary movement of part(s) of the body due to muscle contractions.

Unilateral: Occurring on one side of the body. Parkinson's disease symptoms usually begin unilaterally.

Wearing-off effect: The tendency, following long-term levodopa treatment, for each dose of the drug to be effective for shorter periods of time.