

Diagnosis

There is no “one way” to diagnose Parkinson’s disease (PD). However, there are various symptoms and diagnostic tests used in combination. Making an accurate diagnosis of Parkinson’s — particularly in its early stages — is difficult, but a skilled practitioner can come to a reasoned conclusion that it is PD. It is important to remember that two of the four main symptoms must be present over a period of time for a neurologist to consider a PD diagnosis:

Shaking or tremor

Slowness of movement, called bradykinesia

Stiffness or rigidity of the arms, legs or trunk

Trouble with balance and possible falls, also called postural instability

Often, a Parkinson’s diagnosis is first made by an internist or family physician. Many people seek an additional opinion from a neurologist with experience and specific training in the assessment and treatment of PD — referred to as a movement disorder specialist.

The Parkinson’s Foundation recommends that a person with symptoms resembling those of PD consider making an appointment with a movement disorder specialist. To find a specialist in your community, call our free Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (473-4636) from Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM ET to 8:00 PM ET.