

THE MECHANICS OF BALANCE – Staying Steady in a Complex World



Dr. Tricia Creel, PT, DPT, NCS, is a physical therapist at Washington University. Dr. Creel has over 10 years of experience with both neurologic rehabilitation and post-rehabilitation wellness programs, most notably with individuals living with Parkinson's disease. Her other clinical interests include vestibular rehabilitation. Dr. Creel is a Board Certified Neurologic Specialist (NCS).

Balance, particularly how to keep your balance, is a topic of interest for many people with Parkinson's disease. There are usually multiple factors that lead to a fall, but balance impairments can be a major contributor. Since falls can cause loss of independence and injury, it is important to understand how balance works and what someone with Parkinson's disease can do to improve their balance, hopefully decreasing their fall risk as a result.

How do you keep your balance?

One of the key ways you stay upright is to constantly make adjustments, consciously and unconsciously, in response to your environment. Some examples of this include:

- Swaying slightly at your ankles when you stand still
- Widening your stance before picking up a heavy object
- Taking a step to recover if you are bumped into
- Holding your arms out to the side as if you are walking on a balance beam

It is also helpful to know that there are three major systems in your body that contribute to your ability to make these important postural adjustments:

- **Sensory** – provides information about the surface you are standing on
- **Vestibular** – provides information about your movement speed and direction
- **Visual** – provides information about how you are oriented relative to other objects

Because we live and move in a complex world, these three balance systems need to be combined and regulated by our brain and nervous system. This allows us to make frequent, precise postural adjustments to meet the demands of the environment.

How can Parkinson's disease affect balance?

Most of the time, postural adjustments occur automatically. However, Parkinson's disease affects the basal ganglia, an area of the brain essential to these automatic postural adjustments. As a result, people with PD must learn how to use other parts of the brain to compensate, which often requires them to use focus and attention to maintain their balance. Some of the other changes that people with PD may experience that affect balance are:

1. Standing and walking with a narrow stance
2. Stooped posture with rounded shoulders and bent hips and knees
3. Difficulty recognizing small changes in surfaces
4. Smaller, slower, and varied steps while walking
5. Turning slower and taking more steps to complete a turn

THE MECHANICS OF BALANCE – Staying Steady in a Complex World *(continued)*

6. Difficulty doing multiple things at the same time
7. Freezing of gait and festination (involuntary acceleration)
8. Fear of falling – which can cause people to change how they walk

What can you do to improve your balance?

The good news is that you can improve your balance through physical therapy, exercise, and environmental modifications. A physical therapist can perform an evaluation to determine your specific balance impairments and design a program to address them. Depending on your needs, the physical therapist may teach you:

- What type, intensity, frequency and duration of exercise is best for you
- What type of equipment is best for you
- How to use external cues, like lines on the floor, to improve your movement
- Strategies to stand up from a chair, move in bed, or get off the floor
- How to change directions safely
- How to improve your walking speed and your ability to multi-task while walking

Several kinds of exercise have been shown to be effective in improving balance for people with PD, including Tai Chi, dance, boxing, and yoga. It can be helpful to find an exercise class in the community that

has been adapted to meet the specific needs of people with PD and is led by an instructor who understands PD. These classes are often offered at different levels of challenge so you can find the right fit for your ability. Also, specificity matters! If you want to improve your balance while walking, one of the best things you can do is get out and walk more.

To summarize, here are some of the most effective ways to improve your balance:

- 1. Walk More:** Set a goal and track how many steps you take every day, increasing gradually to 10,000 steps/day
- 2. Walk Better:** Walk with a partner or with music to set the pace, use walking poles, walk in an open environment
- 3. Exercise More:** 150 minutes per week, aiming for three days of aerobic, two days of strength, one day of balance, and one day of flexibility exercises
- 4. Exercise Better:** consult with a physical therapist, join a PD-specific exercise class
- 5. Reduce Your Risk:** widen your stance when standing still, avoid multi-tasking while moving, reduce clutter in your house, keep a fall diary to detect patterns

Finally, if you have concerns about your balance or if you are starting a new exercise routine, it is always recommended that you consult with your physician.

Let's get moving!

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Across the country, people are coming together to join in a common goal to do all we can to help everyone impacted by Parkinson's disease (PD) to live life to the fullest. There are no limits to the ways that you can get involved and support the American Parkinson Disease Association -Greater St. Louis Chapter (APDA). Join us as we spread hope, optimism, and a positive vision for the future.

Whether you are living with PD, know someone who is, or just want to support a good cause – creating a DIY Fundraiser is a fantastic way to make a difference for those impacted by Parkinson's disease.

How do YOU want to DIY?

Here are some great ways to get you started!

Celebrate a Birthday/Anniversary

Many people turn their birthday or anniversary into an APDA fundraiser. Simply invite friends, family, and colleagues to make a donation in lieu of gifts. Let them know that a gift to APDA is on your wish list! The best gift can be a donation that supports a cause you care so much about!

Participate in an Existing Event

Running a half-marathon? Participating in a bike race? Turn your next event into a personal fundraiser for a cause you care about! Let your friends, family and colleagues know that you're about to take on a challenge and use it as an opportunity to raise money for support, education, and research for those affected by Parkinson's disease. You can turn anything into a fundraiser for APDA!

Create a Facebook Fundraiser

Whether you are living with PD, know someone who is, or just want to support a good cause – creating a DIY Fundraiser is a fantastic way to make a difference for those impacted by Parkinson's disease. Get started today! Google 'How do I start a Facebook Fundraiser' to learn how or contact Melissa at 636-778-3378 or mkskrivan@apdaparkinson.org.

WRITING BIG

by Andie Hill, OTS

Writing and typing is a basic skill that we use every single day. We use it in minuscule tasks from making grocery lists and sending emails, to journaling, or communicating with loved ones. Many of us take this skill for granted, until it becomes challenging, or we are unable to write or type altogether. In occupational therapy, we refer to writing and typing as an Instrumental Activity of Daily Living, or an IADL. When this IADL becomes challenging, it can have a big impact on an individual's quality of life (QoL). Writing and typing can become ever more challenging for certain populations, such as those that experience movement disorders like Parkinson's disease (PD), and as a result, can significantly affect their QoL.

People with PD often experience a variety of motor symptoms which can include challenges with handwriting, known as **micrographia**. Micrographia is a reduction in writing amplitude, stroke duration, fluency, and duration, which can result in small, cramped, and illegible handwriting (Nackaerts et al., 2017). Current research shows the cause of micrographia to be unclear, however there may be a correlation to damage of the basal ganglia motor circuit in the brain. This section of the brain is linked to movement and motor planning, which are both impacted in people with PD (Kanno et al., 2020). Gross motor and fine motor movements become slower, which is referred to as **bradykinesia**. Motor planning becomes slower, which is the ability to remember the correct steps and produce the desired movement without having to think about it, such as writing your name. In addition to handwriting difficulties, these symptoms also impact a person's ability to type on a keyboard or use a mouse.

So, how do people with PD improve their handwriting and typing skills? There are multiple strategies to improve micrographia and typing, including adaptive equipment, exercises, and positioning.



Writing Exercises

A study by Vorazoo et al. (2019) showed improvements in fine motor skills and handwriting speed for people with PD after completing a handwriting exercise program. The handwriting exercises in this program consisted of writing the alphabet five times per day for four weeks using ½ inch graph paper. Participants that completed the exercises demonstrated increased writing speed and satisfaction compared to the control group.

OT Tips:

- Practice lower-case letters and upper-case letters
- Practice with different adaptive writing utensils and wrist weights
- Practice writing in different sizes
 - Practice BIG!
 - Write one letter using the whole page of a notebook
 - Write one letter per 3x5 index card or sticky note
 - ½ inch graph paper should be the smallest size you practice
- Practice writing ABCs on a white board – BIG!
- Practice writing ABCs with your eyes closed
 - Decreasing visual input can improve micrographia (Kanno et al., 2020)
- Utilize external cues
 - Use lined or graph paper
 - Write along to the beat of music to keep a steady pace

About the Author:

Dr. Andie Hill earned her doctorate in Occupational Therapy in April from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. Earlier this year she completed a 14-week capstone project with APDA Northwest where she created a program focused on improving fine motor skills in those with PD

References

Buckley, T., Puncanen, M., & Ogden, P. (2018). The role of the body in fostering resilience: a Sensorimotor Psychotherapy perspective. *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, 13(4).

Kralik, D., van Loon, A., & Visentin, K. (2006). Resilience in the chronic illness experience. *Educational Action Research*, 14(2), 187-201.



CURRENT RESEARCH

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Maximizing Home Independence, Safety and Access to Healthcare for Older Adults in Missouri Study

Contact Tracey Summerfield
SummerfieldT@health.missouri.edu
or 573-882-1991

Walking and Music Study

Contact Martha Hessler
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Walking Study

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Cognitive Stimulation Therapy Group

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Parkinson Disease of Exercise Phase 3 Clinical Trial: SPARX3

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Lower Back Pain Study

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Sleep Study

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SPEECH, VOICE AND SWALLOWING



What You Need to Know About Speech, Voice and Swallowing, and Why a Speech-Language Pathologist Can Be Your Best Next Step



Emily Buxbaum,
MS CCC-SLP &
Andrea Vaughan,
MS CCC-SLP,
Board Certified
Swallowing

Specialist are both

speech-language pathologists, assistant professors and clinical service providers in the Department of Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences at Saint Louis University. Emily and Andrea are experienced in working with clients with Parkinson Disease and have worked across various medical and clinical settings.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, 75 to 90% of people with Parkinson Disease (PD) are at risk for developing voice and speech problems. The Parkinson's Foundation reports that as a result of speech and voice problems, "people with PD report they are less likely to participate in conversation or have confidence in social settings than healthy individuals in their age group."

Maybe you or someone you love has noticed changes such as a softer or breathier voice, mumbling speech, or a monotone, unchanging

pitch. Unfortunately, just as PD may affect the systems that help us stand, walk and balance, it can have a similar effect on the muscles that help us produce voice and speech, which can make communication difficult. In fact, changes in the quality of the voice (hoarseness, breathiness) may be one of the first signs of PD. Additionally, we use the same groups of muscles involved in voice and speech for swallowing. The Mayo clinic lists chewing, eating and swallowing problems as common complications of PD.

Strong and effective swallowing depends on quick timing and precise coordination of breathing with the muscles of the mouth, tongue and throat. Any change in the ability to control and coordinate these muscles can result in coughing when eating and drinking, the sensation of food stuck in the throat and things "going down the wrong pipe," which, in those with compromised health, may become a dangerous long-term issue, leading to pneumonia and further health complications. Fortunately, there are specialists that can help with these problems.

A speech-language pathologist (SLP), especially one who is experienced with clients with PD, will be able to work with you on exercises, strategies and techniques that will help improve speech production and reduce swallowing difficulties. There are also practical steps you can take every day to help improve your speech, voice and swallowing.

If your voice is soft, you may not always be aware of it. PD can bring with it a change in sensory processing that makes one perceive their own voice differently, you do not hear it as low or “mumbled.” One thing to do is effortfully “speak up,” exaggerating words with increased volume and intent when others seem to not hear or understand you. It may seem to you like you are yelling or sound silly, but to your listener, you will likely sound clearer and more understandable, not too loud. This becomes easier with regular practice.

Simple exercises to do on a regular basis are:

- hold out a long, loud, steady “aaaaah” after a deep breath
- count numbers out loud, in a slow, exaggerated, projected voice
- read a short passage aloud (newspaper headlines, a familiar poem or anything nearby), using a purposeful, strong voice and projecting across the room

Improving the control and coordination of the breath with the speech mechanism may also have a positive effect on swallowing and help to avoid new swallowing issues from developing.

There are multiple ways to target speech and swallowing specific issues. To have a more in-depth picture of the nature and severity of your specific needs, a consultation with an SLP is a great first step.

Ask your doctor for a referral or search online for local providers who are qualified. At the Saint Louis University (SLU) Reinert Speech-Language Clinic, for example, SLPs are trained in the two-part program SPEAK OUT™ and the LOUD CROWD™, developed by the **Parkinson Voice Project** organization. They can also provide evaluation of swallowing with a fiberoptic scope, and other assessments of speech, voice and cognition. SLU graduate students in their clinical training work with our licensed, certified SLPs to develop individualized treatment plans and track progress over time, resulting in improved outcomes for clients. If you would like to schedule a consultation, or to know more about how an SLP may help you, please contact SLU’s Reinert Speech-Language Clinic at **(314) 977-3365**, or email SLUSpeechHearingClinic@slu.edu. More information and new client paperwork is available at <https://sites.google.com/slu.edu/slureinertclinic/home>

References:

<https://www.parkinson.org/pd-library/fact-sheets/Speech-Therapy>
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9392-speech-therapy-for-parkinsons-disease>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/parkinsons-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20376055>
<https://www.parkinsonvoiceproject.org/>

VIRTUAL EXERCISE CLASS SCHEDULE

Please visit: bit.ly/APDAYouTube for Live Stream exercise classes.
 Contact APDA at 636.778.3377 or apdastlouis@apdaparkinson.org for zoom link

YouTube

DAY	TIME	CLASS	LEVEL	INSTRUCTOR
Monday	10:00am	Strength & Cardio	Level 2	Marina Clements
	1:00pm	Interval Training	Level 2	Jen Berger
Tuesday	1:00pm	Seated Exercise	Level 1	Michelle Valenti
Wednesday	2:00pm	Interval Training	Level 2	Michelle Valenti
Thursday	1:00pm	Seated Exercise	Level 1	Jen Berger
	11:00am	Tai Chi	Level 1 & 2	Craig Miller
Friday	11:15am	Tai Chi & Meditation	Level 1 & 2	Craig Miller
	1:00pm	Tai Chi	Level 1 & 2	Craig Miller

Zoom

DAY	TIME	CLASS	LEVEL	INSTRUCTOR
Tuesday	9:00am	Seated Exercise	Level 1	
Thursday	2:00pm	Seated Exercise	Level 1	

IN-PERSON EXERCISE CLASS SCHEDULE

Contact individual location to register. For more information please call 636.778.3377 or apdastlouis@apdaparkinson.org

MISSOURI CLASS SCHEDULE

LOCATION	DAY	TIME	LEADER	LEVEL	CLASS
Cape Girardeau	Mon/Wed/Fri	9:00am		Level 1	Boxing
Chesterfield ADPA Office	Tuesday	10:00am	Jen Berger	Level 2	Circuit Training
	Tuesday	11:00am	Jen Berger	Level 2	Strength and Cardio
	Tuesday	1:00pm	Pamela Todd	Levels 1 & 2	Yoga
	Wednesday	10:00am	Michelle Valenti	Level 2	Intro to Exercise
	Wednesday	11:00am	Michelle Valenti	Level 1	Seated Exercise
	Wednesday	1:00pm	Marina Clements	Levels 1 & 2	Movement Training
	Thursday	11:00am	Craig Miller	Levels 1 & 2	Tai Chi
	Thursday	1:00pm	Michelle Valenti	Level 2	Strength and Cardio
	Friday	10:00am	Craig Miller	Levels 1 & 2	Tai Chi and Meditation
Friday	11:15am	Craig Miller	Levels 1 & 2	Tai Chi	
Chesterfield YMCA	Mon/Wed	12:30pm	Michelle Valenti	All Levels	Parkinson's Pedalers
Kirkwood YMCA	Monday	11:30am	Frank Tucci	Levels 1 & 2	Parkinson's Exercise
Maryland Heights YMCA	Tuesday	11:00am	Joan Paul	Level 2	Exercise for Parkinson's
Ste. Genevieve	Thursday	11:00	Becky Baumann	Level 1	Parkinson's Exercise
St. Louis City Stephen A Orthwein Ctr.	Thursday	12:00pm	Annie Morrow	Level 1	Interval Training
	Friday	2:00pm	Mike	Levels 1 & 2	Fit and Fun
Sunset Hills	Friday	1:00pm	Marina Clements	Level 2	Movement Training
Washington	Mon/Wed	1:00pm		Level 1	Parkinson's Exercise

ILLINOIS CLASS SCHEDULE

LOCATION	DAY	TIME	LEADER	LEVEL	CLASS
Champaign YMCA	Monday	1:00pm	Jessica B.	All Levels	Pedalers Cycling
	Monday	1:00pm	Jenny Redden		Seated Yoga
	Tues/Thurs	1:00pm	Lindsay R. Jenny Redden		Functional Chair Fitness
	Wednesday	1:00pm	Jessica B.		Strength & Balance
	Friday	1:00pm	Lindsay R.		Standing Functional Fitness
Decatur YMCA	Tues/Thurs	9:00am		All	Pedaling for Parkinson's
Edwardsville YMCA	Tues/Thurs	11:00am		All	Exercise for Parkinson's
Highland Korte Rec Center	M/W/Th	11:00am		All	Cycle and Strength
O'Fallon YMCA	Tuesday	12:00pm	Victoria White	All	Exercise for Parkinson's
	Thursday	1:00pm	Stefanie McLaughlin	All	Exercise for Parkinson's
Quincy YMCA	Monday	12:00pm		All	Fit to Fite PD Boxing
	Friday	10:30am		All	Stretching
Springfield	Tues/Thurs	1:30pm	Eva Fischberg	All	The Joy of Movement

SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

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MISSOURI SUPPORT GROUPS

LOCATION	DAY	TIME	LEADER	MEETING SITE
Ballwin	4th Tuesday	2:30pm	Chaplain Carla Schmidt	Meramec Bluffs Care Center
Branson	1st Thursday	12:00pm		Stone Co Health Dept., Ste 11
Cape Girardeau	2nd Monday	5:30pm	Jayanti Ray	Cape Girardeau Library
Carthage	3rd Monday	11:30am	Tericia Mixon	Fair Acres Family YMCA
Chesterfield	1st & 3rd Tuesday	11:00am	Carrie Burgraff	VIRTUAL
Chesterfield Caregivers	2nd Monday	10:30am	Lynda Wiens & Jay Bender	APDA
Joplin	Monday	3:30pm	Lori Marble & Aaron Lewis	VIRTUAL
Kirkwood	4th Tuesday	6:30pm	Terri Hosto	VIRTUAL
Ozark	4th Monday	10:00am		Sharlin Health & Neuro
Rolla	3rd Tuesday	2:30pm	Julie Riggs	Phelps Health Delbert Day Cancer Inst
South County	4th Wednesday	10:30am	Kimberly Sanders	VIRTUAL
Springfield	2nd Saturday	11:00am	Cassi Locke	The Bodysmith
	3rd Tuesday	6:00pm		Kingsway UMC
Ste. Genevieve	2nd Wednesday	10:00am	Teddy Ross	Ste. Gen. Co. Mem Hospital
St. Louis Caregivers	3rd Monday	1:00pm	Kathy Schroeder	VIRTUAL
St. Peters	1st Tuesday	1:00pm	Jodi Peterson	Spencer Road Library
Washington	2nd Monday	6:00pm	Carol Weber	Washington Public Library
YOPD	Every Thursday	6:00pm	Karen Frank & Mike Mylenbusch	VIRTUAL

ILLINOIS SUPPORT GROUPS

LOCATION	DAY	TIME	LEADER	MEETING SITE
Alton	2nd Wednesday	1:00pm	Dustin Heiser	SSP Main Bldg, The Meeting Rm
Belleville	3rd Monday	1:30pm	Jodi Gardner	SW Illinois College's Programs and Services for Older Persons
Carbondale	1st Wednesday	1:00pm	Gayla Lockwood	VIRTUAL
Champaign	Monday	10:00am	Carol Clark	Savoy United Methodist Church
Decatur	3rd Thursday	1:30pm	John Kileen	Westminister Presbyterian Church
Edwardsville	1st Tuesday	2:00pm	Pam Pinegar/Sarah Hoelscher	Edwardsville YMCA
Greenville	2nd Tuesday	1:00pm	Robbie Mueth	Bond County Senior Citizens
Highland	4th Tuesday	2:00pm	Kayla Deerhake	Sullivan Conference Room at St. Joseph Hospital
Jacksonville	1st Wednesday	1:00pm	Jim & Fran Ringle	VIRTUAL
Quincy	2nd Saturday	10:00am	Terri & Dave May	Quincy Public Library



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Please join us on **Saturday, October 8, 2022**
at the Logan University Athletic Field for this year's
APDA Greater St. Louis Virtual Optimism Walk.

*Lace up your sneakers and step up to help
us put an end to Parkinson's disease!*



APDA Greater St. Louis Chapter

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