



Thank you for your interest in the High Intensity Training for Parkinson's Disease (HIT-PD) Program offered by Spaulding Cape Cod. This program was developed in 2015 based upon the current research on what the effects of exercise had on people living with mild stage PD. This HIT class is geared towards high functioning and newly diagnosed patients and has been showing statistically significant data in regards to improving mobility, strength, endurance, balance and cognition in this patient population. The program has been running in Orleans since early 2015 with great results.

Here is what we know now based upon the literature:

- 1) Self-efficacy, fear of falling and lack of time have been identified as barriers to exercise in people living with PD. Self-efficacy is defined as 'beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments' (Bandura, 1977).
- 2) The goals of early referral to physical therapy are to support sufficient physical activity to prevent secondary complications and encourage self-management of this disease.
- 3) Through early introduction to exercise, people living with Parkinson's disease may improve their aerobic fitness, quality of gait and muscle strength, as well as positively affect the non-motor sequelae of the disease, including mood, fatigue and cognition.
- 4) Research currently being performed in lab models suggests that moderate intensity exercise may have a neuro-protective effect through increased production of mitochondria in brain cells and enhanced expression of brain derived neurotrophic factor, leading to a slower progression of the disease.

All programs are taught by experienced, licensed, clinicians.

Heather Merrill, MSPT has over 19 years' experience working in a variety of clinic settings. She has been a full-time staff Physical Therapist at Spaulding Outpatient Center in Orleans since 2008. She has been running the Parkinson's Wellness Program in Harwich since 2011. In 2015, she was part of the team that started the High Intensity Training Class (HIT). She enjoys working with the Parkinson's disease population and helping to educate patients along with their families and caregivers in the community and has presented at several Parkinson's support groups on Cape Cod, MA.

Jennifer Hardigan, PTA has been a Physical Therapist Assistant at the Spaulding Orleans outpatient clinic since 2003. She works with both the Parkinson's High Intensity and Wellness Programs. She has seen firsthand the effects of Parkinson's, as she has a close family member afflicted with this progressive disease. She is a huge advocate for exercise, especially in this population, in order to maintain optimal function, mobility, and independence for as long as possible. Jennifer is also active in the BITS (back in the swing) program through the Spaulding adaptive sports program.

Nicole Alberghini, PT, DPT, recently joined the Orleans staff as a full time Physical Therapist at Spaulding Outpatient Center in Orleans in 2018. While in PT school she was able to assist with running an exercise class through Hearth, Inc. which provides housing for the formerly homeless elderly population in Boston. In addition, she has been able to volunteer at the Cape Cod Challenge MS Walk, where she helped at the various rest stops providing taping and stretching for the walkers. She is excited to work with and teach exercise class to those diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease on Cape Cod.

Caitlin Geary PT, DPT joined the Spaulding Orleans team in 2021 after working at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Charlestown on the stroke and neurology unit since 2017. She has treated people with Parkinson's in both the inpatient and outpatient settings and has seen the positive effects that exercise can have on people's movement and function. She is excited to continue working with those diagnosed with Parkinson's through exercises classes in the community here on Cape Cod.

***"The HIT exercise class is as important to me as my PD medications. It is a great help with balance and strength building which allows me to stay active and the exercises may be slowing down the progression of m disease. It is also a lot more fun exercising with others than doing it alone." B.W. Brewster, MA***

***" The program forced me to exercise muscles that I normally do not use in my daily life. I found that my coordination of various activities got better each week. Challenging exercises became less difficult as the weeks progressed. I felt good as time progressed. I am very thankful for the opportunity to participate in the program." D.B. Brewster, MA***

The exercise class is held at Nauset Fit Co. 21 Old Colony Way, Orleans, MA 02653 .

Classes are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30-11:30am, in 7 week sessions 5x/year. See attached schedule for specific dates .

Contact the clinic to set up your pre-session outcome measure testing. Also, you will have a registration form and waiver to fill out prior to starting the class. Do not hesitate to call with any questions 508-240-7203.

We are excited that you will be joining us for this program,

**Jennifer Hardigan, PTA**  
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