



AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION

ILLINOIS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Oct/Nov/Dec
2025

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An APDA Illinois Parkinson's Conference

Building Your Parkinson's Playbook to Live Your Best Life

Monday, November 3rd, 8:00 am - 12:30 pm

Northern Illinois University - Naperville Campus: 1120 E Diehl Rd.

Join us for a powerful day of learning, support and connection. You'll enjoy expert speakers, a robust community resource fair, and opportunities for new connections.

Conference Highlights:

- **Dr. Jori Fleisher, MD, MSCE, FAAN** – Overcoming Myths & Barriers to Live Well with PD at Any Stage
- **Saar Anis, MD** – Exploring the Impact of Deep Brain Stimulation on Sleep in Patients with PD
- **Helen Hwang, MD, PhD** – Small Molecules as Potential Therapeutic for PD

Panel Discussion

Resource Fair

Registration is free of charge, however donations are greatly appreciated.

708-329-9527

apdail@apdaparkinson.org

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YOUR SECOND BRAIN: THE GUT'S ROLE IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE



Richard A. Manfready, MD, AM, FACP, is a physician-scientist who specializes in disorders of the gut-brain axis. His lab has made discoveries connecting Parkinson's disease with GI disorders and has translated those findings to benefit patients. Dr. Manfready is a gastroenterologist and hepatologist at Cedar Valley Digestive Health, where he is Director of Motility, and is Assistant Professor, Adj. at Rush University Medical Center. He received his SB degree from MIT, AM from Harvard, MD from Tufts, completed internship and residency in medicine at Mount Sinai, and completed clinical and research fellowship at Rush. He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology, and Hepatology, and was elected as a Fellow of the American College of Physicians.

When most people think about Parkinson's disease (PD), the first things that come to mind are tremors, stiffness, or slowed movements. But there's another side of Parkinson's that isn't talked about as much: the gut.

Doctors and scientists now call the gut our "second brain." Why? Because it has its own network of nerves and trillions of bacteria that help control not just digestion, but also mood, immunity, and even brain health. And for people with PD, the gut often plays an especially important role.

Why the Gut Matters in PD

The gut and brain are connected by a "highway" called the vagus nerve. This pathway allows the two to constantly communicate. What happens in the gut can influence the brain, and what happens in the brain can affect the gut.

In PD, many people experience digestive problems such as constipation, bloating, or slow digestion years before movement symptoms appear. Scientists now believe these gut changes may be one of the earliest warning signs of Parkinson's.

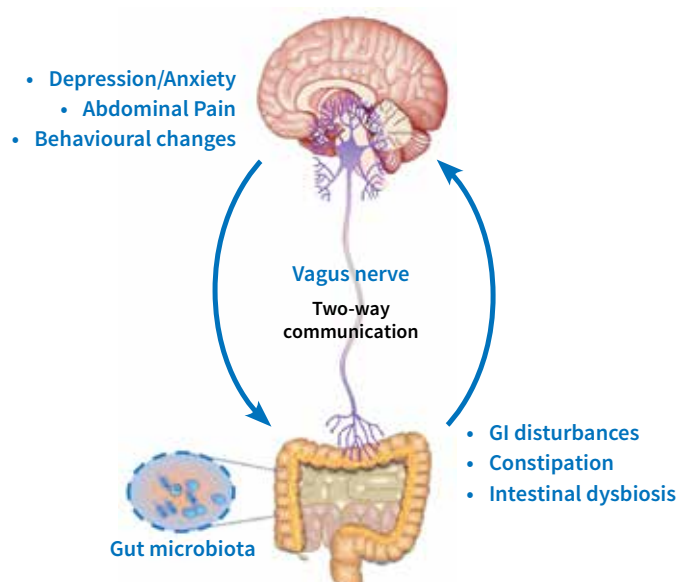
Constipation: A Common but Overlooked Problem

Constipation is one of the most common non-motor symptoms of PD. It is not just uncomfortable; it

can affect everyday life in big ways. People with constipation may feel sluggish, bloated, or anxious about their next bowel movement.

Constipation also matters because it can make PD medications, like levodopa, work less effectively. If the gut is slow, the medicine is absorbed more slowly too. This means motor symptoms like tremor or stiffness may be harder to control.

Unfortunately, common remedies such as laxatives, stool softeners, or fiber supplements often don't work very well for PD-related constipation. That's why new treatments are needed.



Caring for Both Brains: Lifestyle and Diet

Thinking of the gut as a second brain reminds us that gut health is brain health. Beyond medications, lifestyle choices play a powerful role in reducing inflammation and supporting both gut and brain function.

- **Mediterranean and MIND diet:** Rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, and fish, this diet has been shown to lower inflammation and support brain health. Studies suggest it may also reduce progression of PD symptoms and improve overall quality of life (*Estrada et al., Nutrients 2022*). See the graphic below for recommendations
- **Yoga and mindfulness:** Gentle movement, stretching, and breathing exercises can improve gut motility, reduce constipation, and lower stress, which in turn benefits both brain and gut health (*Cramer et al., Movement Disorders 2020*).
- **Probiotics and prebiotics:** Research is exploring how balancing gut bacteria may improve digestion and potentially affect neurological health (*Lubomski et al., Journal of Parkinson's Disease 2020*).



Upward-Facing Dog



Revolved Warrior



Extended Puppy



One Legged Wind Removing

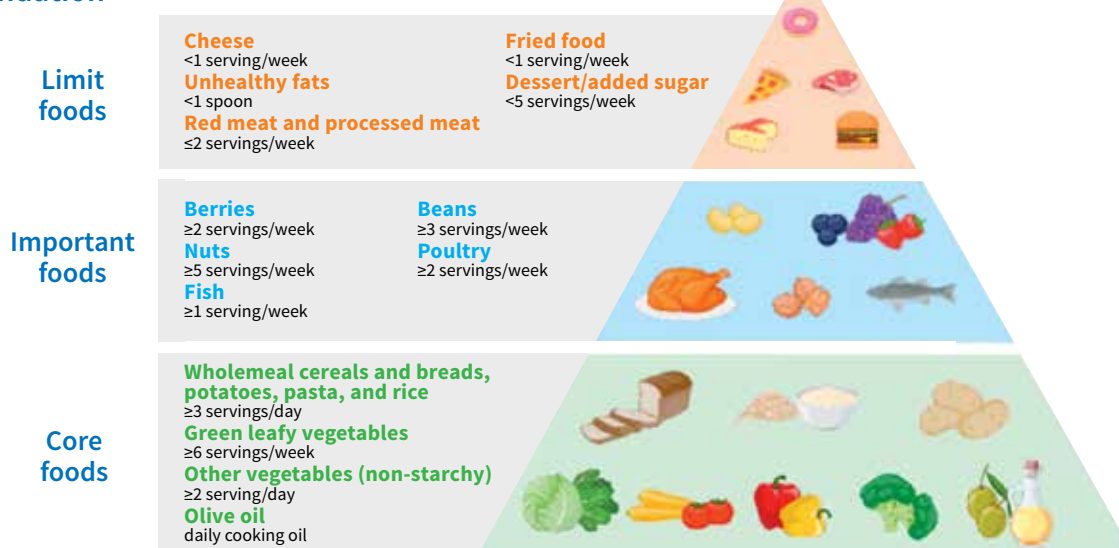


Revolved Chair



Triangle

MIND diet recommendation



Zhang, L.; Liu, R.; Song, Z.; Zhang, X. Exercise, Diet, and Brain Health: From the Perspective of Gut Microbiota Regulation. *Nutrients* 2025, 17, 1686.

Cedar Valley Digestive Health Research Email: hpunukula@cvmcspc.com

WALKING THE TALK: MIKE HILL'S INSPIRING JOURNEY WITH PARKINSON'S AND APDA

By Mike Hill



When you meet Mike Hill, one of the first things you'll notice is his warmth. A lifelong go-getter, Mike has always leaned into life with energy and heart. Growing up in Arizona, he was always active, eventually heading to Minnesota to play college hockey. It was there he met his best friend—and future wife—

Darci. After earning his Finance degree, Mike built a long and successful career at Pilot, eventually becoming a Division Vice President.

In 2006, he and Darci moved to the Chicagoland area, where they've built a full life surrounded by family, including beloved grandkids. Mike retired in 2023, looking forward to more time with loved ones. But shortly after retiring, he noticed something unusual, his foot began to bounce and twitch while he was resting. After seeing several doctors, he was initially diagnosed with essential tremor. Eventually, after an 8-month wait and a visit to a movement specialist, Mike was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, confirmed through a skin biopsy.

"It wasn't a death sentence, it was a life sentence." Mike speaks about his diagnosis with uncommon perspective: "Getting the diagnosis was somewhat of a relief. It could have been worse, it could have been a death sentence. Instead, it was a life sentence."

Mike dove headfirst into learning everything he could about Parkinson's. One thing stood out: exercise is one of the most powerful tools for managing the disease. So he got moving, literally. He started attending classes, joined a support group, and quickly discovered a vibrant, welcoming Parkinson's community.

"We've made amazing new friends since the diagnosis," Mike says. Then in 2024, Mike learned about the APDA Optimism Walk. Not one to do things halfway, he signed up, and in his very first year, raised over \$4,000, making his team the highest fundraiser in Illinois.

At Optimism Walk, Mike met Melanie Adams, Executive Director of APDA Illinois, who was so inspired by his energy and leadership that she invited him to join the Chapter's Board of Directors. After some thoughtful consideration, Mike said yes. Today, he serves on the

Executive Committee, helping shape the programs and resources APDA offers to the local Parkinson's community.

"The Optimism Walk was eye-opening," Mike says. "There were so many people there supporting others with PD. The atmosphere was incredibly positive and uplifting. No one was feeling sorry for themselves, it was a celebration of strength and community. I was especially impressed by Melanie and how organized everything was."

So how did Mike's team become the highest fundraisers, not just in Illinois but across the entire country in 2025? It started with family. "They know what I'm dealing with and they all wanted to support me." Then came his support group and exercise class, many of whom enthusiastically joined his team. From there, he reached out to longtime friends and former colleagues. And he didn't stop there.

"I just kept going. I wanted to raise more awareness, more funds, and bring more people into the fold." And it worked. In 2025, Mike personally raised more money than any other individual in the country for APDA's Optimism Walk.

But for Mike, it's never been about the numbers. It's about giving back, and lifting others up. "Supporting APDA has given me an outlet to do something positive. It's also opened the door to another support network, people who really understand."

Mike's leadership style is quiet and humble and his voice, calm, grounded, and kind, is one that people naturally listen to.

His advice to others facing a Parkinson's diagnosis? "A positive attitude goes a long way. There are things you can do to help yourself, exercise, eat well, sleep well, and surround yourself with positivity. Parkinson's is not a death sentence. Get involved. Make a difference. Register for the Walk, raise money, raise your voice, and do something about this disease, not just for yourself, but for all Parkies."

Want to follow in Mike's footsteps?

Join us for the next APDA Optimism Walk in June 2026 (Naperville). Get moving, get connected, and get involved in supporting people living with Parkinson's, because no one should face this alone.

Tips and Tricks for Parkinson's

Provided by: Drake University Occupational Therapy Doctoral Students Class of 2025

Typing & Computer Use

- **Voice Text:** Use voice text to type faster and reduce typing errors.
- **Computer Settings:** Change the mouse setting on your computer to filter out handshaking.
- **Large Keyboards:** Use a larger keyboard with separated buttons to make typing easier and prevent hitting keys by mistake.
- **Use Predictive Text:** Predictive text is a setting on most smartphones and computers that will complete a word for you after you type the first few letters.



AMERICAN
PARKINSON DISEASE
ASSOCIATION

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us for this year's APDA Illinois Optimism Walk and to our generous sponsors who made it possible. Your support helps bring strength, optimism, and hope to the Parkinson's community across Illinois.

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SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

Alton - SSP Main Bldg., The Meeting Room
2nd Wednesday 1:00 pm

Alton - SSP Wellness Center
2nd Tuesday 2:00 pm – *Care Partner Only*

Aurora - Waterford Place
1st Tuesday 10:30 am

Aurora - Waterford Place
3rd Tuesday 10:30 am – *Care Partner Only*

Belleville - Southwestern Illinois College's
Programs and Services for Older Persons
3rd Monday 1:30 pm

Carbondale - Prairie Living at Chautauqua
1st Wednesday 1:00 pm

Carlinville - Carlinville Area Hospital
4th Tuesday 11:00 am

Centralia - Heritage Woods Independent Living
2nd Wednesday 2:00 pm

Champaign - Savoy United Methodist Church
Every Monday 10:00 am

Chicago - Virtual Caregiver Group & Book Club
Every Thursday 10:00 am - 11:30 am,
October 23rd - December 11th

Chicago - Virtual PD Support Group
4th Tuesday 11:00 am

Chicago - Virtual MEN Only Support Group
1st Tuesday 11:00 am

Chicago - Navigating Loss Together: Virtual
Bereavement Group
Every Wednesday 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm,
October 29th - December 31st

Decatur - Westminster Presbyterian Church
3rd Thursday 1:30 pm

Edwardsville - YMCA Niebur Center
1st Tuesday 2:00 pm

Glen Ellyn - Movement Revolution
3rd Monday 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Glenview - Endeavor Health Ambulatory Care
Center, Hospital Room 3 and F
2nd Tuesday 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Greenville - Bond County Senior Citizens
2nd Tuesday 1:00 pm

Highland - St. Joseph's Hospital
4th Wednesday 2:00 pm

Jacksonville - Virtual Support Group
1st Wednesday 1:00 pm

Maywood - Loyola Outpatient Center
1st Monday 2:00 pm

Normal - The Activity and Recreational Center (ARC)
3rd Tuesday 1:00 pm
No Meetings November or December

North Utica - Utica Fire Station
1st Monday 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Northbrook - Covenant Living of Northbrook
4th Monday 10:00 am

Northfield - North Shore Senior Center
2nd and 4th Wednesday 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Okawville - St. Peters UCC Church Hall
1st Tuesday 6:30 pm

Quincy - Public Library
2nd Saturday 10:00 am

Springfield - Chatham United Methodist Church
4th Friday 1:30 pm

Exercise Schedule



Scan for more information
about exercise!

Virtual Classes

Stay active from home with our ongoing virtual exercise classes. Visit our website for the latest schedule and registration details.

YouTube On-Demand

Looking for flexibility? Our sister chapter in Missouri offers dozens of on-demand exercise classes on YouTube — with new sessions added every week. Revisit past favorites anytime.

In-Person Classes

Prefer to exercise in person? Explore opportunities available in Southern Illinois by visiting our website.

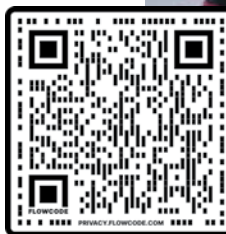


APDA RESOURCES FOR VETERANS

Veterans may be at an increased risk of Parkinson's disease (PD) because of exposures during their service. At APDA, we are committed to making sure veterans living with PD, and their families, have access to the information and resources they need.

From understanding benefits and care options to finding local support and educational tools, APDA is here to help our veteran community navigate life with Parkinson's.

Scan the QR code to explore resources created especially for veterans with PD.



BRAIN GAME - WORD PUZZLE

Cognitive exercise is just as important as physical exercise. Activities like puzzles, reading, card games, or learning something new help keep your brain sharp and engaged. Social interaction, spending time with friends and family, is also a powerful way to stimulate the mind.

Directions: Fill in each box with a word that fits in the category on top and starts with the letter on the left.

	Sports	Food/Drink	Holidays	States
G	<i>Example: Golf</i>			
T				
F				
I				

	Cities	Furniture	Colors	Names
B				
S				
T				
C				

This word puzzle is provided by Cassie Serrata at Connect Therapy.

Make a Difference Today and Save on Taxes

Did you know you can support APDA and reduce your taxable income at the same time? If you're age 70 ½ or older, you can make a tax-free gift of up to \$100,000 each year directly from your IRA to a qualified nonprofit like APDA.

This giving option known as an IRA Charitable Rollover or Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) allows you to avoid paying income tax on your distribution, satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD), and make a meaningful difference in the lives of people impacted by Parkinson's disease.

Looking ahead into the new year: QCDs from IRAs will become even more valuable starting in 2026. Transfers made directly to charity will still reduce your required minimum distribution (RMD), lowering taxable income. For those who itemize deductions,

QCDs will also help avoid the impact of a new law that limits part of the charitable contribution deduction.

No matter the size, your gift provides vital programs, education, and support to the PD community, while giving you valuable tax advantages.

To set up your QCD, please contact your IRA custodian or financial advisor.

For more information on ways to give to APDA Illinois, please contact:

Melanie Adams
Executive Director
madams@apdaparkinson.org
708-522-4772



APDA Staff and Board of Directors

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Executive Director

Alix Huffman,
Regional Admin. Coordinator

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Fundraising and Events Manager

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Welcome Elizabeth Klink! Liz is a dedicated non-profit professional with experience in fundraising development and event execution for large-scale events. In her free time, she enjoys hot yoga classes and reading fiction novels. She is excited to continue her professional journey with APDA and delights in working directly with individuals with Parkinson's and their families.

CARING FOR OUR LOVED ONES WITH PARKINSON'S

by Katie Freeman, MSW



Katie Freeman, MSW is the Manager of Programs and Community Engagement for the Northwest Chapter of the American Parkinson Disease Association. They support Parkinson's caregivers by facilitating support groups,

offering one-on-one consultations, leading educational programs, and providing information and referral services. Below are Katie's answers to a few questions commonly asked by caregivers:

1. What do I call myself? Caregiver? Caretaker? Care Partner?

It may seem like semantics, but these terms reflect the relational dynamic and philosophy of care between a person with Parkinson's and the people responsible for their care. Think about the power dynamics implied in the words take versus give versus partner. Taking or giving is something you do to someone while partnering is something you do with someone.

Caregiver is generally considered the most neutral term and can refer to a close family member or a paid professional who cares for a person with Parkinson's. Care Partner is typically reserved for a spouse or family member who partners with their loved one with PD to manage their care. Caretaker has become less popular over the years, but it's often used interchangeably with caregiver.

For some of us, the distinctions between these terms are meaningful and important, while others don't care as much. Just know that there is no right or wrong way to refer to yourself; it's simply a matter of what feels true and genuine for you and your loved one with Parkinson's.

2. What does caregiving look like throughout the different stages of PD?

Your doctor may have told you that there are five stages of Parkinson's, based on a staging system created by Drs. Hoehn & Yahr in the 1960s. While it has some flaws, this staging system can help us understand how Parkinson's motor symptoms progress over time. With each stage of Parkinson's, there is a corresponding stage of caregiving. Expect your role as caregiver to evolve over time as Parkinson's symptoms progress and your loved ones' needs change.

3. I feel overwhelmed, burnt out, and powerless. How can I motivate myself to keep going?

Caregiving can be a way that we show love, respect, and gratitude to the people in our lives who have Parkinson's. But it can also be challenging work that impacts our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. In those moments when you feel the most overwhelmed and powerless, remind yourself that you have a choice in every situation. Am I going to help this person? Or am I going to walk away? For many of us, the idea of walking away is unthinkable. But the reality is that people choose not to care every day.

Instead of doing that every day, you wake up and choose to care. You choose to help someone who is vulnerable. You choose to ensure that this person is safe and their needs are met. You put your values into action. And I'm so grateful for all of you making that choice.

Once you've gotten through that moment of emotional intensity, the next step is to pick up your phone and ask for help.

4. How do I ask for help?

Caregivers often have the hardest time asking for help. Many of us pride ourselves on our ability to care for others and don't want to admit that we can't do everything. We can often assume that other people won't understand what we're going through or that it's a burden on someone else if we ask for their help. We don't want to interfere with our children's or friends' lives.

However, most of us have people in our lives who want to help but don't know how. Have open and honest conversations with these people about the specific tasks that you need help with or the kind of support you need. Let your friends and family tell you what they are able to offer. Communication is key here on both sides.

Remember that helping out feels good! Just like you find meaning in caring for your loved one with Parkinson's, others will find meaning by helping you. Give your loved ones the opportunity to help. For many, that invitation to help will be a gift and an invitation to be closer to you and your loved ones with Parkinson's.



APDA Strictly Social:

**PD &
PIZZA**

**Monthly social group
for individuals with
Parkinson's Disease.**

1ST TUESDAY EVERY MONTH FROM 6 - 7:30 PM

PAISANS PIZZERIA & BAR

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Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

You'll make a real impact while connecting with others who care deeply about helping the Parkinson's community live life to the fullest.

**Ready to get started?
Contact us today and find your perfect fit!**

OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- ♥ APDA Strictly Social Leaders
- ♥ Annual Events:
 - Optimism Walk & Conferences
- ♥ Committee Opportunities

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