

# Nutrition and Parkinson's Disease

Food and drink are important for social purposes as well as for good health. On diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, there is no need to make dietary changes, once the diet is well balanced. Good nutrition will promote good health and following healthy eating guidelines is sufficient.

Vitamins are substances that are needed in small amounts, and are essential for health. The three vitamins A/C/E are collectively known as the "antioxidant vitamins". These vitamins appear to have a preventative role in heart disease and certain cancers. The antioxidant vitamins, especially C and E, are also thought to be of benefit in Parkinson's disease. It is therefore important to ensure that there is good dietary intake of these vitamins daily. The best sources of these are:

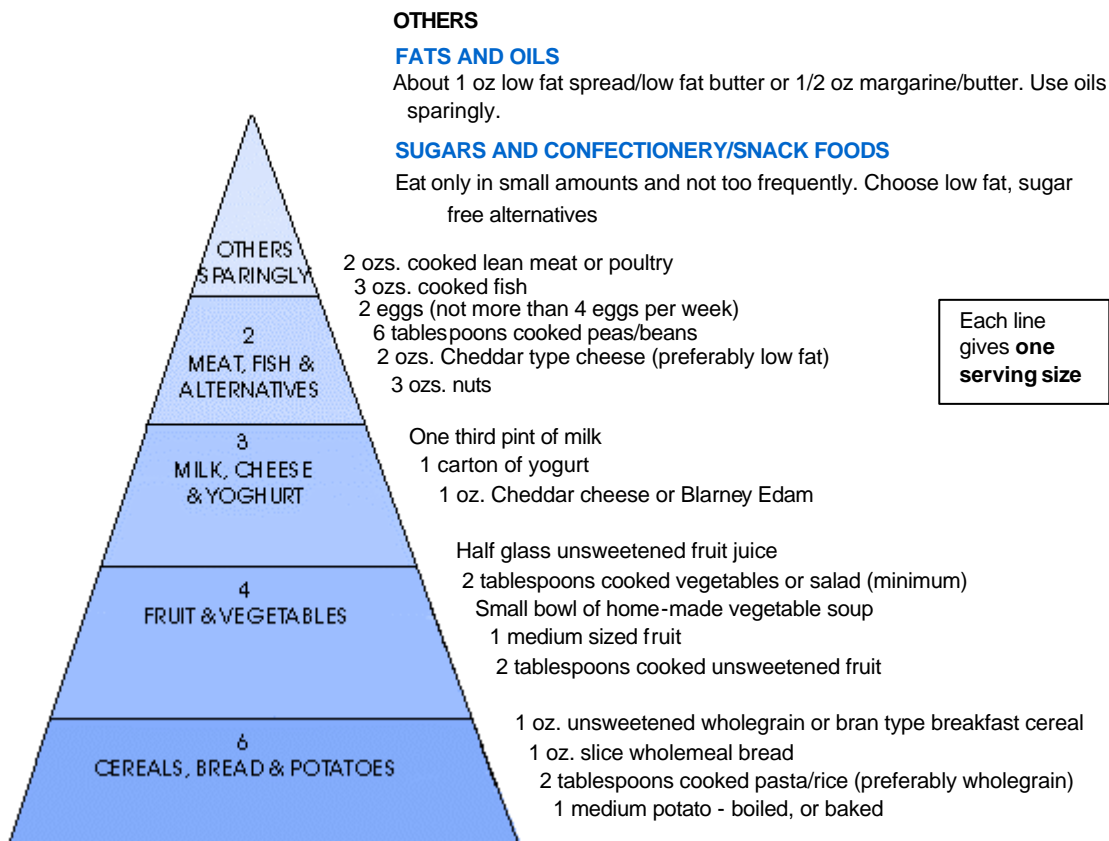
**Fruit and vegetables-fresh or frozen**

**Fruit juice - especially those with vitamin C added**

**Nuts, eggs, some cereal products**

Please refer to food pyramid below for recommended daily intake of the above foods.

## Recommended daily servings from each of the four food groups



## **The two most frequent food related problems that may arise are:**

1 Constipation may become a problem, due to the condition itself and reduced mobility.

It is well documented that increasing your fibre intake (sometimes referred to as roughage) helps to prevent and treat constipation. Fibre is the framework that supports and holds the plant together It is therefore a component that is only found in foods of plant origin. Some foods, particularly wholegrain cereals, oat flakes, fruit and vegetables, peas and beans, contain substantial amounts of fibre.

### *Practical tips to increase your fibre intake:*

- ✦ Choose porridge or a wholegrain cereal for breakfast
- ✦ Use wholemeal/wholegrain bread instead of white bread
- ✦ Use brown rice and wholemeal pasta
- ✦ Increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in diet – 3 servings of fruit, 2 servings of vegetables per day e.g.
  - Home-made vegetable soup
  - Add extra vegetables to stews and casseroles
- Desserts:
  - Stewed fruit and custard
  - Softened oat flakes as a topping for fruit crumble

Without a properly balanced diet (see food pyramid) running in combination with a high fibre diet little will be achieved. If the fibre content is being increased the fluid intake needs to be increased also, as increasing fibre on its own may worsen constipation. Fluid intake should be no less than 8-10 cups daily. This can be incorporated into the diet in the form of fruit pieces, fruit squashes, milk and water.

Exercise is important for good health, but it also facilitates regular bowel motions. Try to incorporate some exercise into your daily routine and remember it does not have to be strenuous!

2. Weight loss may occur as the disease progresses. If this becomes a significant problem some simple steps can be taken to prevent further weight loss and return to healthy weight.

Add butter to sauces, mashed potato, vegetable purees Add cream to desserts, soup, mousses, porridge, milk puddings, mashed potato, coffee  
Add sugar to drinks, cereals, desserts Use honey or jam on desserts, porridge. Add full fat milk to jelly, soup, mashed potato Fry foods - preferably in sunflower or olive oil

*If you are experiencing difficulties with any of the problems mentioned above, contact a dietician who will be able to give advice. Referrals to a dietician can be made through your Hospital Consultant or GP but, in some centres, self-referrals are also accepted.*

### *Tips at mealtimes:*

- ✦ Relax!
- ✦ Always sit upright when eating
- ✦ Take time over meals
- ✦ Cut food into small pieces and chew well
- ✦ Swallow before putting any more food into your mouth
- ✦ Avoid lying down or talking when eating
- ✦ Remove pips, stalks or seeds from fruit and vegetables
- ✦ Takes sips of fluid between each mouthful

N B. Levodopa medication should ideally be taken 1-2 hours before meals, as protein can affect levodopa absorption. Please consult your Doctor for further information.