

Let's start with staying OUT of the hospital.

With the 2013 flu season in full swing, hospitals and nursing homes are busier than usual. To avoid getting the flu, here's a reminder of some things you can do even if you've had your flu shot:

- wash your hands often
- avoid touching your face, especially your eyes and nose
- stay hydrated - drink lots of water, enjoy a cup of tea, eat fresh fruit and vegetables, or how about some soup?
- get plenty of rest and practice reducing stress

When in doubt, check it out

If you're feeling unusually lethargic and confused, don't assume it's because your Parkinson's medications aren't working. We've learned that a bacterial infection like a urinary tract infection or pneumonia can be the cause, as can dehydration. Get checked out by your doctor and hopefully you'll avoid a hospital visit.

Some things you can do now

A hospital stay is frequently unplanned but we can still be prepared. In the resource section of our website I've posted a number of resources including forms that you can complete with the information that medical professionals will find helpful such as contact information and details about medications.

[Click here to go to the hospital and medications page.](#)

Remember to keep this information up to date.

Do you have a plan for an unexpected hospitalization?

Perhaps two plans? One for the person with Parkinson's and one for the caregiver? Who will be the advocate and make the decisions?

Can you call on family members and/or friends? Do they know your plan?

Do you have list of phone numbers in your cell phone or with you for folks you may need to call?

What to take to the hospital with you

As well as the forms, bring your own medications - in their original containers - to the hospital with you because the hospital may not carry all the medications you need, or they may only carry the generic when you might need the trade or brand name type.

After providing the information about your medications, follow up with the staff on duty to confirm that they have noted when your PD medications need to be given, and while in the emergency room, ask if you may continue to take your own medications for PD. There can be delays in getting medications from the pharmacy so having your own PD medications can help staff keep you on your medication schedule and assure that they are given on time.

Some helpful hints from an expert

From Peggy Roberge, BSN Clinical Nurse Coordinator at the Parkinson's Disease Research Education & Clinical Center (PADRECC) and our speaker in September 2012:

- The form provided by PADRECC, Critical Information for Caring for the Parkinson's Patient is an educational piece for medical professionals where you can list your medications, doses, the times you take your medications, off times, etc., as well as which drugs you cannot take.
- If you're not getting your medications on time you need to make it clear to the attending medical professionals how important it is to have them on time. If the ER doctor will not cooperate, then have them call your neurologist.
- It takes a while for dopamine receptors to get used to the change when your usual schedule is disrupted and then again when you go back on your regular schedule.
- Ciprofloxacin or Cipro (an antibiotic) is not compatible with PD medications but the doctor can prescribe another antibiotic.
- To avoid urinary tract infections, take high-potency cranberry pills but do not take cranberry if you're on blood thinners.

Working with medical professionals

Hospital staff may not understand Parkinson's symptoms and how they can affect recovery. For instance, difficulty with swallowing may make it difficult to swallow medications, eat and drink, however a speech therapist can help with an evaluation.

Stress can affect how a person with Parkinson's responds, making symptoms worse or making it more difficult to answer questions.

You can help staff by educating them about how Parkinson's affects you or your loved one, and what they need.

We've heard that Johns Hopkins is offering training to medical staff to educate them about Parkinson's. Does your neurologist know about it?