

Making the Most of Your Neurology Appointment How to Prepare When You're Living with Parkinson's Disease

BY: LISA POTTHOFF AGNP-C, COXHEALTH DEPARTMENT OF NEUROLOGY

For many people living with Parkinson's disease, neurology appointments are an important—but often brief—opportunity to check in, adjust medications, and address concerns. These visits typically occur about every six months, and while patients may wait weeks or even months for their appointment, the actual face-to-face time can feel surprisingly short. Because of this, preparation is key.

A well-prepared patient can help ensure that the most important issues are addressed, leading to better symptom control and more personalized care. Parkinson's disease is highly individualized, and the more detailed information you can share, the more effectively your neurologist can tailor your treatment plan.

So, how should you prepare?

Understanding What Your Neurologist Wants to Know

Neurologists rely heavily on your report of symptoms and daily experiences. Unlike many other conditions, Parkinson's is not managed solely by tests or imaging—it's managed by listening carefully to the patient's story.

Here are the key areas your neurologist is most interested in:

- How Your Medication Is Working
- Wearing Off Between Doses
- Sleep Patterns and Disturbances
- Mood and Emotional Health
- Changes in Motor Symptoms
- How You Take Your Medication
- Timing of Symptoms Throughout the Day
- Exercise Habits
- Hydration and Nutrition
- Alternative Therapies and Devices



Practical Tips to Prepare Before Your Visit

A little preparation can make a big difference. Before your appointment:

- ✓ Write down your top 2-3 concerns
- ✓ Bring a complete medication list (names, doses, timing)
- ✓ Track symptoms for a few days, focusing on patterns
- ✓ Consider bringing a family member or caregiver
- ✓ Note any recent changes in health, falls, or hospital visits

One simple but powerful exercise is to complete this sentence:

"The three most important things I want to discuss today are..."

This ensures your biggest concerns are addressed first.

The Bottom Line

Neurology appointments for Parkinson's disease may be brief, but they are incredibly valuable. With thoughtful preparation, you can turn those limited minutes into meaningful, productive conversations that improve your daily life.

Remember: you are a key part of your care team. The more you observe, track, and communicate, the better your neurologist can support you.



OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks is to educate, support research and improve the quality of life for people with Parkinson's disease.

To improve the quality of life

PGO proudly sponsors multiple exercise and wellness classes for people with Parkinson's and their care partners. Wellness classes help those with PD stay mobile and independent through a variety of physical activities, exercises, and movements specifically designed to improve PD symptoms. PGO also promotes and encourages support groups that help families approach the mental and social aspects of the disease. The groups provide a sense of togetherness so they do not feel alone in their journey.

To provide education

PGO provides education through one-on-one assistance by phone, email, or in-person. Group education is offered through support group meetings. Support group leaders will often have guest speakers from around the area such as healthcare professionals, social workers, wellness instructors, etc. speak on various topics relating to the disease. During Parkinson's Awareness Month in April, PGO hosts an annual resource fair where families may visit with local businesses and organizations to learn about available PD resources. In addition, PGO also partners with the Parkinson's Foundation Heartland Chapter and other organizations to co-host several learning events on different PD topics throughout the year.

To support our community

For over 25 years, PGO has worked tirelessly to help people with Parkinson's disease. PGO and its supporters provided the vision to establish the first clinic for Parkinson's patients known as Parkinson's Clinic of the Ozarks in 2001. In 2015 the clinic moved to the West tower at Cox Medical Center South becoming part of the Jared Neuroscience Center. Through ongoing community collaborations, classes and education offered, PGO provides access to programs and services for the welfare of Parkinsonians, their care partners, families, and friends.

SUPPORT GROUPS

FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE & CARE PARTNERS

Some people may have difficulty coping with Parkinson's disease.

It may be hard for them to ask their doctor questions or talk about their problems with family or friends. Support groups can help keep people up to date about the latest changes and developments in the disease and aid in dealing with day-to-day activities. They also provide an opportunity to discuss experiences and feelings and to share solutions to common problems.

THE BODYSMITH

1136 E. St. Louis St.
Springfield, MO 65806
417-865-0500

Meetings: Second Saturday of the month at 11 a.m.

JOPLIN MERCY

100 Mercy Way,
Conference Room 1
Joplin, MO 65804
417-556-2263

Meetings: Mondays at 3:30 p.m.

COXHEALTH PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP FOR SENIORS

Meyer Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Hospital
3535 S. National Ave.
Springfield, MO 65807
417-269-3616

Must be age 65+ to attend.

Meetings: Third Wednesday of the month from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

FAIR ACRES FAMILY YMCA

2600 Grand Ave.
Carthage, MO 64836
417-358-1070

Meetings: Third Wednesday of the month at 11:30 a.m.

WOMEN'S ONLY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

This group is for women caring for someone with Parkinson's disease. CoxHealth Advantage Care Clinic
1819 S. National Ave.
Springfield, MO 65807
417-269-3616

Meetings: Fourth Tuesday of every month at 3 PM.

Discover DBS



Join PGO Member and Medical Advisor, Lisa Potthoff, for a free seminar to learn more about Medtronic deep brain stimulation (DBS) therapy for the treatment of Parkinson's Disease and Essential Tremor and if it may be right for you.

Learn about the latest advancements in DBS therapy with the Percept™ DBS system and BrainSense™ technology that enables clinicians to personalize and adapt therapy to your individual needs and maximize the time you feel your best.

Speaker: Lisa Potthoff, NP, Jared Neurosciences Neurology

When: September 9th and December 9th
Programs start at 6 PM

Where: Meyer Orthopedic Rehab Hospital-Ozark Room
3535 S. National Ave, Springfield, MO 65807

Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

**For questions and to RSVP please contact
Cox Neurology: 417-623-9130**



Sincere appreciation for assisting Parkinson's Group in our mission to provide education, support research and improve the quality of life for people with Parkinson's Disease.

IN SUPPORT OF PGO

Marjorie Francis
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Gifts to the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks are tax deductible. To learn more, visit us online at parkinsonsgroup.org.

PARKINSON'S GROUP OF THE OZARKS

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Our board of directors come from a variety of backgrounds, including medical, financial, education, legal, and wellness. Each member brings a unique set of skills that helps our organization achieve its mission.

CONTACT PGO

417-814-6067
info@Parkinsonsgroup.org



ABOUT PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Nearly one million people in the U.S. are living with Parkinson's disease, and over 90,000 more are diagnosed each year. Many of these call the Ozarks home. Parkinson's disease is a slowly progressive neurological disease generally associated with tremor or trembling of the arms and legs, stiffness and rigidity of the muscles, slowness of the movement, and impaired balance and coordination. As these symptoms become more pronounced, patients may have difficulty walking or completing other simple tasks. This disease not only affects the patient, but also his or her family.



BECKY BROWN RETIRES FROM PGO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The board of directors of the PGO wishes to extend much appreciation and well wishes to retiring board member, Becky Brown.

Becky's first experience with Parkinson's Disease was as her mother's caregiver. Becky helped her mom navigate the disease without knowing much about it and with limited resources.

Shortly after her mother's death, her husband, Steve, was diagnosed with the disease. This time, his caregiver Becky found Rock Steady Boxing at The Bodysmith, the PGO, and a community that helped them with not only resources but individuals that understood and could relate with what they were experiencing.

Becky wanted to give back to the PD community for the positive experience they had with the programs and groups. Becky decided to join the board and loved her time volunteering with this dedicated and committed group of people.

Becky is a retired teacher with Springfield Public Schools and is often seen out and about with Tank, the support dog that was trained by K-9 for Camos, for her late husband Steve.

Becky has 2 daughters that live in California with their families. She is stepping down from the board to spend more time pursuing other interests and getting to travel to see her 5 grandchildren.

Thank you Becky for your service and hard work fighting back against PD.

Advocacy, Community, and the Aware in Care Mission

BY SHAWNA TINDALL, PARKINSON'S FOUNDATION
AWARE IN CARE AMBASSADOR

When I was 19 years old, I took a job at a nursing home in my hometown while spending my nights in EMT school. I was young, eager to learn, and just beginning to understand what healthcare really meant. One of my very first patient experiences was with an older gentleman who had Parkinson's disease. His wife came to visit him every single day, a beautiful testament to a lifelong partnership. Before the disease progressed, he had been a local mayor and was deeply passionate about politics. Even toward the end of his journey, that civic spirit never left him; he used to walk down the facility hallways, shaking hands with everyone he passed, genuinely asking how they were doing. Getting to know him, hearing his stories, and sharing that time with him was a true blessing. At 19, I didn't fully grasp the massive weight of a Parkinson's diagnosis, but his face and his story stayed tucked away in my mind for decades.



Life has a way of bringing things full circle. In my mid-thirties, the reality of this disease struck much closer to home when one of my best friends from high school was diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson's. We were only 37. When you are that young, a diagnosis like that is a profound shock. It forces you to realize that Parkinson's doesn't care about age or timing. Just a few years later, my professional healthcare journey pulled me directly into the neurology space. There, I lived the daily realities of this disease alongside patients and their families. I saw the grueling medication struggles, the constant search for symptom management, and the desperate need for caregiver education and resources.

It was during my search for those exact resources that I connected with the Parkinson's Foundation Aware in Care initiative. Today's healthcare landscape is incredibly convoluted. It is a frustrating reality that, all too often, you almost have to know the system—or know someone who does—just to get the basic help you deserve. One of the primary reasons I chose healthcare as a career was a deep passion for patient advocacy. Serving as a board member for the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks (PGO) allows me to live out that purpose, and aligning with the Aware in Care advocacy movement provides the exact avenue needed to champion patient safety.

Navigating Parkinson's can be a scary, overwhelming journey, but no one in our community should have to walk it in the dark. Local support groups, dedicated foundations, and national safety initiatives are the safety nets that catch families when they are stumbling. The Parkinson's Foundation offers phenomenal, specialized education and resources—ranging from provider training tools and caregiver guides to the vital Aware in Care medication management kits and tailored exercise programs.

The beauty of these initiatives is their accessibility. You don't even have to know an individual ambassador personally to benefit from these life-changing tools; they are readily available to anyone on the website. Whether it is ensuring a local patient has a hospital kit packed and ready for a safe medical stay, or helping a caregiver find a local support group through PGO, the goal is simply to bridge the gap between national resources and our neighbors here in the Ozarks. Ensuring our community has access to these critical tools isn't just a professional goal for me—it's a deeply personal one.

PGO Welcomes *new board members*



MOLLIE ESTES

Hello, I'm Mollie McGinnis Estes and I've been a Personal Trainer and Fitness Instructor in Springfield for

over 25 years. Originally from Golden, CO, I came to MO in 2000 to attend SMSU, yes that ages me. I began working in places like Ozark Fitness (now Genesis), the YMCA and CoxHealth Fitness Centers, where I became the Group Exercise Manager at the Meyer Center for 11 years. While at CoxHealth, I was invited to teach a Parkinson's Group Exercise class through the physical therapy department. Right away I enjoyed working with PD patients and witnessed how much exercise helped slow the disease. The 2020 pandemic paused these PGO sponsored exercise classes at Meyer for over 2 years and I saw some class members regress during that time. When I left CoxHealth in 2022 to manage and now own F8 Training & Wellness Studio, I restarted the PD Exercise classes at F8 thanks to support from PGO. Witnessing the benefits of "Big & Loud" exercises performed consistently by our class participants over the years has proven to me that exercise is a very beneficial treatment for PD!

I became aware of movement as medicine early in life when I was diagnosed with Scoliosis at age 7. My journey through chronic pain and spinal injuries has given me a passion to help people and teach them how to rehabilitate our bodies. I've worked with Bodybuilders to Beginners and love seeing my clients and class members move better and enjoy life more! Even if you don't like Stretching, Weights or Cardio, I'll find a way to get you results and make it fun too! When I'm not in the F8 Training gym, you can find me enjoying the great outdoors with my husband

and two adventurous kiddos. If you ever come to my classes, you'll hear some stories about chickens and other farm animal antics with my little country home life. I'm excited to serve on the PGO Board and look forward to spreading the word about our wellness classes and how they bring hope to the local PD community!



OLIVIA ROSS

Hello everyone, my name is Olivia Ross and I am so happy for this opportunity to join PGO. I am an LPN and I worked

at the Parkinson's Clinic of the Ozarks. There I developed a passion for learning about Parkinson's and spreading awareness. I started my career in 2020, working at an inpatient military hospital, then transitioned to working in outpatient neurology at Cox. While at Cox, I trained with NP Lisa Potthoff and Dr. Ellis who fostered my passion for Parkinson's. I attended the Parkinson's Foundation's team training and advanced team training in 2024. I have also attended multiple DBS conferences with Medtronic and Abbott.

I live in Marshfield with my husband, 3 dogs, and 5 cats. I plan to use my medical background and experience to help PGO.



ALEX WALLACE

I am honored and excited to join the Board of Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks and grateful for the opportunity to sup-

port an organization that means so much to local families. I currently serve as the Director

of Marketing for Haven Home Health and Hospice, where I work closely with community partners, healthcare professionals, patients, and families throughout Southwest Missouri. Through my role, I have developed a deep appreciation for the importance of education, advocacy, and local support for individuals and families navigating aging, chronic illness, and caregiving.

I am passionate about connecting people with resources that bring clarity, comfort, and confidence during difficult seasons of life. I also serve as Executive Producer of Haven's podcast, *In Good Company: Age Better*, which highlights local experts and meaningful conversations around caregiving, eldercare, wellness, and quality of life. In addition, I am currently serving as the Chair of the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Springfield, Missouri, which has further strengthened my commitment to supporting families, raising awareness, and bringing people together around causes that impact our community.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my wife and son and staying involved in efforts that strengthen our local community. My personal and professional experiences continue to shape my passion for serving others and helping families feel supported through every stage of life.

I am excited to support the mission of Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks and help further its impact in our community. I look forward to learning from Parkinson's families, building meaningful relationships, and helping raise awareness of the resources, encouragement, and connection available through the organization.

Springing into Action & Awareness

A LOOK BACK AT PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH AND BEYOND



- **In the spotlight.** You might have caught a glimpse of PGO in the media. We were featured on KY3's The Place and Volunteer Ozarks, KOLR10's Unscripted, Haven Home Health & Hospice's In Good Company Podcast, and KICK 92.3 FM's Prime Time.
- **Educational events.** PGO Medical Advisor, Lisa Potthoff, shared information with families about Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) therapy for PD and Essential Tremor while PGO Members Don Smillie and Molly McGrady visited with healthcare professionals at the CoxHealth Geriatric Conference. Dawn Davis spoke with the Kiwanis Club about PD in the Ozarks.
- **Fun at the fair.** Our Parkinson's Resource Fair was a great success! We had another full house with over 200 people attending the event—our best turnout yet! This year's event included 25 businesses and organizations and showcased mini learning seminars. And a big thank you to our sponsors: **Acadia, Amneal, Medtronic, Ozarks Elder Law, & Empower:Abilities!**
- **Shine bright, do good.** Kendra Scott (jewelry store) held a weekend fundraiser at the Battlefield Mall raising over \$200 in support of PD with PGO Member June Kincheloe.
- **Let the good times roll.** Our Parkinson's families enjoyed watching the Celebrate America Route 66 Parade during PGO's Park for Parkinson's get-together. Classic cars and cool weather made for an unforgettable fun evening!

FREE GROUP CLASSES & ACTIVITIES IN THE OZARKS

As part of our mission, PGO is proud to sponsor multiple exercise and wellness classes for people with Parkinson's.

PD DANCE

THURSDAYS AT 3 PM

The Bodysmith
1136 E. St. Louis St.
Springfield, MO 65806
417-865-0500

YOGA FOR PARKINSON'S

TUESDAYS AT 10:30 AM

King's Way United
Methodist Church
2401 S. Lone Pine Ave.
Springfield, MO 65804
417-209-5418



PD SPEAK, SWALLOW & LEARN

TUESDAYS AT 1:30 PM & 6 PM

Virtual option available.
MSU – Ann Kampeter Sciences Hall
509 E. Cherry St.
Springfield, MO 65806
501-412-5621

PARKINSON'S EXERCISE THERAPY

**TUESDAYS AT 2 PM &
SATURDAYS AT 10 AM**

F8 Training and Wellness Studio
2048 S. Stewart Ave.
Springfield, MO 65804
417-720-1057

PILATES

WEDNESDAYS AT 12 PM & 1 PM

A physical assessment is required to start this class so make sure to call before joining.

The Bodysmith
1136 E St. Louis St.
Springfield, MO 65806
417-865-0500



LOUD FOR LIFE SPEECH THERAPY

WEDNESDAYS AT 4:00 PM

Completion of LSVT LOUD is required before joining.

The Downtown Church
314 E. Walnut St.
Springfield MO 65804
417-763-9722

Provided thanks to a community grant from the Parkinson's Foundation.



DRUMMING THERAPY & MUSIC THERAPY CLASSES

**THURSDAYS AT 10:30 AM
& FRIDAYS AT 9:30 or 11:30 AM**

No musical experience necessary.
Caregivers welcome.

Center for Music Therapy & Wellness

Drury University - Springfield Hall
Springfield, MO 65802
417-873-7877

PARKINSON'S INDOOR CYCLING

FRIDAYS AT 12 PM

Cox Meyer Center
3545 S. National Ave.
Springfield, MO 65807
417-844-3443



KARA DUNN MEMORIAL ROCK STEADY BOXING

Days and times vary. A physical assessment is required before joining. Visit www.bodysmithpilates.com or call for more info.

The Bodysmith
1136 E St. Louis St.
Springfield, MO 65806
417-865-0500





Parkinson's Group
of the Ozarks

1136 E. St. Louis St.
Springfield, MO 65806



TRIVIA NIGHT

CLASS IS IN SESSION

**SATURDAY
JULY 11TH, 5PM**

JOIN US FOR TEN ROUNDS OF TRIVIA TO RAISE MONEY FOR
PARKINSON'S GROUP OF THE OZARKS

WILL YOUR TEAM GRADUATE TOP OF YOUR CLASS OR GET
STUCK IN DETENTION?

DOORS OPEN AT 4:30PM. COME EARLY TO ENJOY THE FOOD
TRUCK!

RELICS EVENT CENTER SPRINGFIELD, MO

