

**September 7, 2025**

**What do you call a skull that stays out in the snow too long?  
... A numb skull!**

## PARKINSON'S DISEASE

“  
Do not confuse my bad days  
as a sign of weakness. Those  
are actually the days I'm  
fighting my hardest.”  
”

**EXERCISE IS MEDICINE**

Click the icon for a kick-butt workout  
with Coach Betsy:

**HKC Strength Class**



**HKC Parkinson's Fitness Class**



## Breathing

**Written by Kristi Riker OTD, OTR/L**

### **Why does Parkinson's affect breathing?**

Breathing problems may arise from changes in muscle control, posture, medications, and the way the brain regulates breathing. You may have noticed shortness of breathing, shaky breathing, or trouble feeling like you can get a full breath into your lungs. While there is much debate on the causes of respiratory dysfunction with PD, studies have found these to be the main issues that arise:

### **Main breathing problems with PD:**

- Restrictive breathing problems:
  - trouble expanding the lungs fully
  - feels like you cannot get a full breath
  - caused by rigidity in chest wall muscles, diaphragm, and trunk, stooped posture
- Upper airway obstruction
  - PD can cause narrowing of the airway
  - may notice 'stridor' - high pitches breathing sound
- Dyspnea on exertion
  - Shortness of breath with activity
  - due to decreased endurance, weaker respiratory muscles, autonomic nervous system changes
  - can be worsened by coexisting heart or lung problems
- Impaired automatic breathing
  - in advanced PD, the brain's ability to regulate breathing can be impacted, leading to irregular or shallow breathing
  - Occurs especially during sleep
- Sleep related breathing disorders
  - higher rates of sleep apnea with PD
  - may have slow shallow breathing during REM sleep
- Dyskinesia-related breathing problems
  - Involuntary movements of the chest and diaphragm muscles can make breathing jerky and uncoordinated
- Aspiration
  - swallowing problems can increase chances of food/liquids entering the airway, increasing risk of aspiration pneumonia

Whew! There is clearly an increased risk of breathing problems with Parkinson's disease. So, what can you do to improve your breathing and decrease your risk of respiratory issues? First, always **consult your medical provider** to determine what type of treatment is appropriate for you. Depending on your specific case, your doctor may suggest treatment through medication alterations, speech therapy breathing exercises, posture therapy, oxygen therapy, etc.

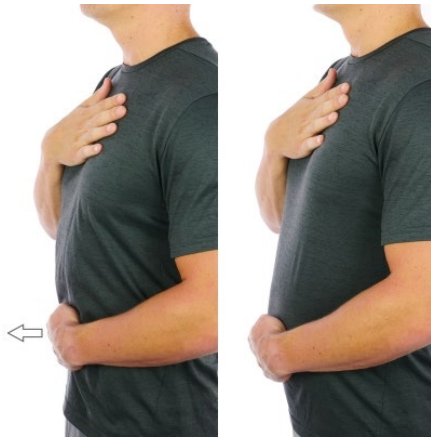
If your doctor finds your respiratory barriers are related to **postural issues**, they may refer you to an OT or PT. Your therapist will work with you on stretching your **respiratory muscles!** Respiratory training has been found to have a positive effect on breathing with PD and should be considered when breathing issues arise.

### **Why does stretching and strengthening the respiratory muscles work?**

- Better posture **improves lung expansion**. When your posture is stooped forward, your chest cavity compresses and your diaphragm becomes restricted, limiting the amount of air you can inhale.
- Stretching and strengthening can **open up the airway**. When slouched forward, the airway can become constricted, making it harder to breathe freely.
- When the respiratory muscles are **strong and flexible**, they are less likely to fatigue, allowing for consistent deep breathing while awake and asleep

There are multiple main and accessory muscles involved in respiration. Now, how can you stretch and strengthen them? Here is an example of exercises geared towards improving the function of some of the respiratory muscles. Make sure to consult your doctor or PT/OT before attempting these exercises.

### The Diaphragm:



While standing, place one hand on your breast bone and one hand on your abdomen near your navel.

Slowly take a deep breath in and focus on trying to get the hand on your stomach to rise while the hand on your breast bone remains still.

Repeat 10x

Complete 3 sets daily

## Pectoralis:



While standing at a corner of a wall, place your arms on the walls in the shape of a "W." Take one step forward towards the corner. Bend your front knee until a stretch is felt along the front of your chest. Your arms should be pointed downward towards the ground.

Repeat 3x  
Hold 20 seconds  
Complete 3 sets



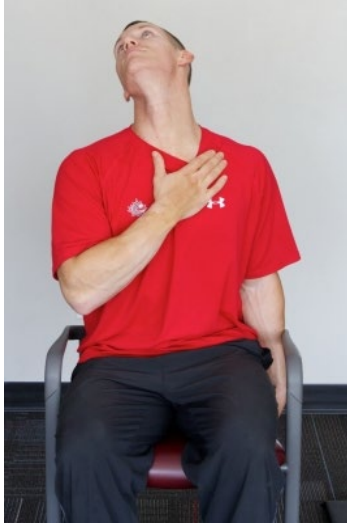
## Intercostals:

Standing straight with feet shoulder width apart, hold a weight in one hand at the side of the body with the elbow and shoulder relaxed. Let the weight gently pull the trunk toward the side.

When a comfortable stretch is felt on the side of the body opposite the weight, return to upright in a controlled manner.

Repeat on the other side.  
Repeat 10x / Hold 5 seconds  
Complete 3 sets

## **Sternocleidomastoid:**



In sitting, place one hand over the front of your collarbone, then extend your head backwards and to each side.

Repeat 3x  
Hold 20 seconds  
Complete 3 sets

## **Scalenes**



Tilt your head to the side and then rotate your head downward. Hold for a stretch. Return to original position and then repeat.

Repeat 3x  
Hold 20 seconds  
Complete 3 sets, 1x/day

## Serratus Anterior:



Standing with elbows and forearms on wall, dip chest into wall and push back out through the elbows, keeping elbows on wall throughout motion.

You want to feel the shoulder blades wrap around your rib cage

Repeat 10x

Complete 3 sets

## Resources:

Torsney KM, Forsyth D. Respiratory dysfunction in Parkinson's disease. *J R Coll Physicians Edinb.* 2017 Mar;47(1):35-39. doi: 10.4997/JRCPE.2017.108. PMID: 28569280.

van de Wetering-van Dongen VA, Kalf JG, van der Wees PJ, Bloem BR, Nijkrake MJ. The Effects of Respiratory Training in Parkinson's Disease: A Systematic Review. *J Parkinsons Dis.* 2020;10(4):1315-1333. doi: 10.3233/JPD-202223. PMID: 32986684; PMCID: PMC7683068.

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

~Monday, 11am Hamil-Kerr Strength class ([zoom](#))

~Saturday 11am Hamil-Kerr Parkinson's Fitness ([zoom](#)) Coach Betsy

~Thursday, 3pm [Zoom](#) PD Spin, Ragsdale YMCA

~Thursday, 12pm In Person PD Spin, Spears YMCA

~ **In-person Parkinson's Spin Class at YWCA of Highpoint**

Tuesday and Thursday- 12:00-1:00

~**In-person Parkinson's Spin Class at Ragsdale YMCA**

Tuesday and Thursday- 10:15

In-person / zoom Parkinson's Dance with Hilary Savage – 1pm second and fourth Wednesday of every month. If you plan on attending in person, please join Hilary at PurEnergy, 1905 Ashwood Ct and for those of you joining via zoom, here is the zoom link <https://zoom.us/s/81028088770>

**In-Person Tai Chi with Michele**

Michele's 1pm Tai Chi class takes place on the first and third Wednesday of every month at Michele's beautiful new studio - ProActive Therapy and Wellness, - 6579 Lake Brandt Rd, Summerfield ~[Rock Steady Boxing - Greensboro \(in person\)](#)

~[Rock Steady Boxing of Archdale \(in person\)](#)

~[A.C.T. By Prince Deese](#)

~For information on in-person 1:1 training in your home, contact Alesia Pendleton [pendleton.alesia@gmail.com](mailto:pendleton.alesia@gmail.com)

~Parkinson's Stretch Class at Rock Steady Boxing, Greensboro (spouses welcome)- Friday at 11:30am

~Will Powell- 336-706-0271

# ONLINE RESOURCES

~Michael J Fox Foundation: [www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)

~Davis Phinney Foundation: [Live Well with Parkinson's TODAY - Davis Phinney Foundation](http://LiveWellwithParkinsons.com)

~Parkinson's & Movement Disorders Alliance: [www.pmdalliance.org](http://www.pmdalliance.org)

~Parkinson's Association of the Carolinas: [www.parkinsonassociation.org](http://www.parkinsonassociation.org)

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And of course, reach out to me anytime.

Yours, Coach B

**Rock Steady Boxing Certified Coach**  
**Certified Parkinson's Disease Fitness Specialist**  
**ISSA Certified Personal Trainer**

