
News Release

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MULTIMEDIA ALERT: For more information and downloadable audio and video from Dr. Hassan about Parkinson's disease, visit the [Mayo Clinic News Network](#).

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For Immediate Release

Parkinson's Goes Prime Time: Five Things to Know About Parkinson's Disease

ROCHESTER, Minn. — Michael J. Fox is back in the spotlight this fall in a new sitcom “[The Michael J. Fox Show](#)” and spreading awareness about [Parkinson's disease](#), a condition both he and his TV character have in common. Fox has been an outspoken advocate for Parkinson's disease research and awareness since disclosing his condition to the public in 1998.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement and may cause shaking, muscle stiffness, slowing of movement, impaired balance or other symptoms. It impacts about 1 in 200 people, says [Anhar Hassan, M.D.](#), a Mayo Clinic movement disorders specialist.

“What Michael J. Fox is doing to spread awareness on Parkinson's — from fundraising to education to playing a TV character with the disease — is very commendable,” says Dr. Hassan. “Parkinson's disease touches the lives of many people. Education is vital.”

Five things every person should know about Parkinson's disease:

- People with Parkinson disease are usually diagnosed in their 60s, and risk increases with age. Early onset, such as Michael J. Fox's, is uncommon.
- With the right medications, a healthy diet and exercise regimen, people with Parkinson disease may live 20 years or longer.
- Genes are to blame in a small number of people, but for most the cause of Parkinson's disease is unknown.
- The diagnosis is based on symptoms and signs. There is no blood test to diagnose it, although researchers are working to develop a test to detect the disease years before it presents.
- Parkinson's disease can shorten lifespan mainly due to swallowing problems with pneumonia, or injuries from falling. Measures can be taken to avoid or reduce this from happening.

To interview Dr. Hassan or another Mayo Clinic Parkinson's expert about the disease contact, Nick Hanson at newsbureau@mayo.edu or call 507-284-5005.

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