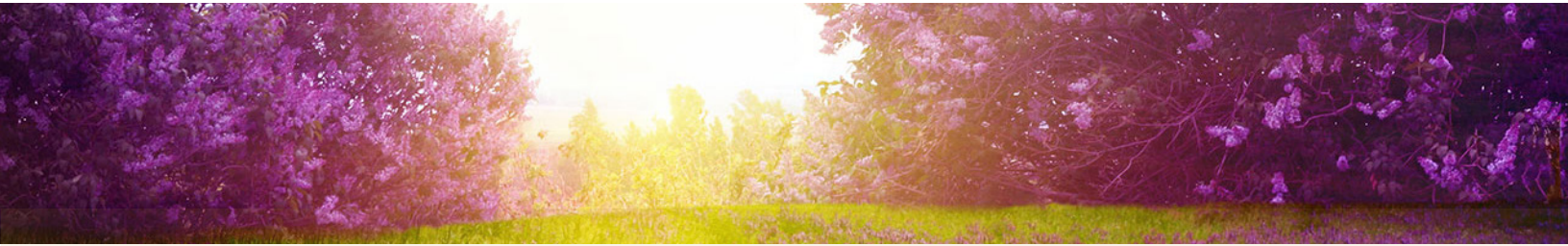


The Empowered Care Partner

Together With You on Your Ceresti-Care Partner Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

Parkinson's Disease Facts and Myths

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a brain disorder associated with symptoms like tremor, stiffness, problems with walking and balance and coordination. There are also non-movement symptoms such as moodiness, fatigue, depression, sleep disorders, speech and voice problems.

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month.

So, in the spirit of raising awareness, let's explore some facts and myths about this medical condition. Knowing the difference between fact and myth is important because incorrect information may keep a patient from receiving the correct treatment.

Here are five misconceptions and the facts that set the record straight:

#1: A person with Parkinson's disease will always have a tremor. You may be surprised to know that this is a myth. Although tremor is a common symptom of PD, there are some patients who will never develop one, and others will develop the tremor later in the disease process.

#2: A person with Parkinson's disease will only have symptoms that affect movement - or other "motor" symptoms. This is also a myth. Movement and motor skills are typically affected in Parkinson's disease, however, there are other symptoms like changes in mood regulation and cognition (memory and thinking skills), depression, sleep problems and fatigue also associated with PD. Many of these do not appear until the later stages of the disease. Always speak to your doctor about these other symptoms as well, since they are likely to be treatable.

#3: There are no other treatments for PD beyond taking medication. Giving in to this myth can be counterproductive, as it may prevent you from doing all you can to remain active and independent. Studies show that weekly exercise can extend the amount of time a person with Parkinson's disease can perform physical tasks independently as compared to those who don't exercise.

#4: Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS therapy) is experimental. Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) involves the placement of electrodes into the brain, similar to how a pacemaker has electrodes that are placed into the heart. DBS can help reduce the motor symptoms of PD such as stiffness, tremor and slowing of

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movement. This procedure has been performed successfully for the past 30 years and has been the standard of care for over two decades.

#5: Parkinson's is a fatal disease. Parkinson's disease itself is not fatal, although there can be complications in later stages that can lead to death. A person with late-stage Parkinson's disease may have difficulty swallowing, which could lead to a choking episode or aspiration pneumonia, which is a lung infection caused by food or liquid that has entered the lungs. PD in late-stage may also lead to balance problems or weakness that could increase the risk for falling.

It's always important to talk to your doctor about any new symptoms you may be experiencing. These problems can be addressed in speech/swallowing therapy and physical therapy. Always speak to your doctor if you begin to notice symptoms like this.

To learn more about Parkinson's disease and other amazing facts about the brain, visit the **Ceresti Brain Health Education Portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com and click on the **Overview** tab. If this is your first time visiting the portal, use the code **GIVECARE** to register.

By Marilyn Abrahamson - Brain-Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health.

RECOGNIZING CHANGE

Recognizing the Signs of a Urinary Tract Infection

Your loved one seems different. Something seems wrong, but you can't put your finger on exactly what it is. Having the ability to recognize change is an essential part of your role as a care partner.

Even if you can't identify the reasons for the change, your acknowledgment that something *doesn't seem right* will be your cue to more closely observe your loved one, and contact their doctor, if needed.

Could it be a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)?

Symptoms of a UTI can differ from person to person, and it can become more common as people get older. Because the symptoms can be so diverse, UTI can be difficult for you to identify.

What causes a UTI?

The urinary tract includes:

- The urethra, which is the opening that carries urine from your bladder

- The ureters
- The bladder
- The kidneys

When bacteria enter the urinary tract through the urethra, the immune system is often unable to combat their proliferation. In this case, these bacteria can spread to the kidneys and bladder, resulting in a UTI.

What are the most common symptoms of a UTI?

- Changes in urinary frequency – having to go more frequently and/or more urgently
- Discomfort, such as burning or pain during and after urinating
- Urinary retention
- Fever

Additional signs of a UTI may include:

- Agitation
- Confusion or delirium
- More frequent falls

RECOGNIZING CHANGE

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- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting
- Tenderness or pain in the lower back, pelvic area, or abdomen

Can a UTI cause delirium and confusion?

Some older people with UTI may experience changes in behavior known as delirium with symptoms that may (or may not) include:

- Aggression
- Agitation
- Confusion
- Hallucinations

Scientists continue to study delirium with UTI. At this time, delirium with a UTI is thought to result from *inflammation* that affects how the brain works. As the body fights an infection, stress hormones and other chemicals are released into the bloodstream. These chemicals cause symptoms such as fever, chills, and body aches as well as causing stress and inflammation within the brain. This brain inflammation can manifest as delirium.

In younger, healthier people, an infection is less likely to cause delirium because of something called the *blood-brain barrier* – a protective layer between the brain and the bloodstream. Its job is to block pathogens like viruses and bacteria from threatening the health of the brain. In older adults, this barrier becomes more porous and less effective, increasing the chance that pathogens from the infection could enter and affect the brain.

How does delirium from a UTI differ from dementia?

Delirium is characterized as a period of confusion that begins quickly and persists over a short period of time (hours or days), and then resolves. Conversely, dementia is a slow mental decline that occurs over a longer period of time (months or years), and does not usually resolve.

Fortunately, not all older adults experience delirium with a UTI and not all people with delirium have a UTI.

How is a UTI treated?

Your loved one's doctor will likely take a urine sample and test it for specific bacteria. If these bacteria are detected, the doctor will treat the UTI with antibiotics.

If you suspect your loved one may have a UTI, it's important to contact their physician as soon as possible. Older people can have weaker immune systems, making it harder to treat an infection, especially if the bacteria is given more time to propagate. If gone untreated, bacteria can spread throughout the urinary tract to the kidneys and beyond, overwhelming the immune system. If this happens, it can lead to sepsis, a serious form of infection that's difficult to treat.

How to help your loved one avoid a UTI:

- Encourage them to empty their bladder completely when urinating.
- Promote good hydration by offering water to drink throughout the day.
- Encourage thorough bathroom hygiene.
- Your loved one's doctor may also suggest supplementation such as cranberry supplements, probiotics, and D-Mannose. Although these supplements are available over-the-counter, it's important to always discuss supplementation options with your loved one's physician before offering them on your own.

***Although many older people do not experience delirium or confusion with a UTI, some do. It's important to note that delirium *may be your loved one's only overt symptom of a UTI*, making it crucial for you to know how UTI specifically affects them.



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TAKE CARE OF YOU

START A SELF-CARE JOURNAL

There's a saying that goes, *"you can't see the thoughts swimming around in your head – you have to get them down on paper."*

Journaling is the perfect way to engage in self-care. It's the gift of time and space you give yourself. Time to be alone, sort out your feelings and manage your thoughts and feelings. Once those feelings start to flow more freely, you learn so much about yourself.

Start with a dedicated notebook and a pen that feels comfortable in your hand so you'll be able to write as much as you need to. If you'd rather type, you can create a dedicated document on your computer.

Here are five writing prompts to help you get started:

1. *Start off on a positive note by writing about the good things that happened throughout the day.* Did you have a great cup of coffee? Is it a beautiful, sunny day or is the weather rainy but cozy?
2. *Next, write about the challenging aspects of your day.* Is there something weighing on your mind? Let out your emotions and alleviate some of the pressure they may be causing.
3. *Are you dwelling on a major decision that needs to be worked out?* Sometimes, we just need to sort out our feelings to gain perspective. Dumping our thoughts into a journal is a great way to create objectivity.
4. *Make a gratitude list.* List of four or five things that make you feel grateful. There's nothing better to adjust your perspective than practicing gratitude. In life, we tend to focus on the negative, but if you're listing positive thoughts, you'll always be on the lookout for the good things.
5. *Write your hopes and wishes.* Your hopes and dreams matter. Keep writing them down so you maintain your focus on them. That way, when opportunities to do something you love present themselves at the right time, you'll recognize them.

Once you start journaling, remain consistent. You'll find yourself revisiting old entries from time to time, and you'll notice how you dealt with those challenges. It's a wonderful opportunity to have a window into your own soul, allowing you to get to know the person inside of you from a different perspective.

*So, take this time for yourself - **and take care of you!***