

# Swimming Safety Checklist: For People with Parkinson's & their care partners

## 1. Pre-Swim Preparation

- **Physician Clearance:** Has the swimmer discussed aquatic exercise with their neurologist?
- **DBS Review:** If the swimmer has Deep Brain Stimulation, have they been warned that "land success" does not always equal "water safety"?
- **The "Buddy" Rule:** Is there a dedicated person in the water or on the deck specifically watching this swimmer? (Never swim alone).

## 2. Entry & Environment

- **Safe Access:** Use a ramp or stairs with a handrail. Avoid ladders or diving.
- **Depth Check:** Ensure the swimmer stays in "chest-deep" water or remains close to the pool edge.
- **Lifeguard Brief:** Has the on-duty lifeguard been notified about the swimmer's condition?

## 3. Mobility & Coordination Assessment

- **Horizontal Stability:** Can the swimmer maintain a flat position without their legs sinking?
- **Stroke Sync:** Are the arms and legs moving in a coordinated rhythm?
- **Treading Water:** Can the swimmer keep their head above water for 30 seconds without assistance?
- **Breathing:** Is the swimmer able to time their breaths without gasping or swallowing water?

## 4. Warning Signs (Stop Immediately if:)

- Swimmer is struggling to stay horizontal.
- Movements become excessively "small" or "frozen."
- Sudden loss of coordination (common with DBS settings).
- Increased tremors or visible fatigue.

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### Why This Matters

- **The Benefit:** Water reduces fall risk and builds strength/posture.
- **The Risk:** Nearly **50%** of Parkinson's swimmers in a major study reported near-drowning experiences due to sudden coordination loss.
- **The DBS Factor:** Deep Brain Stimulation can improve walking but may "short-circuit" the complex coordination needed for swimming. **Always re-test skills after a DBS adjustment.**