Navigating the Holidays with Parkinson's

Energy, Simplicity & Connection: Stress, rushed schedules, and fatigue can temporarily worsen Parkinson's symptoms and drain energy. Whether you are navigating the season solo or alongside a care partner, simplifying traditions saves your strength for what matters most.

STEP 1: SET YOUR HOLIDAY GAME PLAN

Before the calendar fills up, take 15 minutes—on your own, with your care partner, or with a trusted friend—to decide what truly brings you joy this year.

- **Top 2 Favorite Traditions:** *(e.g., watching a classic movie, attending a service, sharing one favorite dish)*
  1. _____
  2. _____
- **What to Let Go of This Year:** *(e.g., hosting overnight guests, baking multiple desserts, long letters)*
  - _____
- **Ideal Gathering Window:** Visits feel best when they last about _____ hours, ideally between _____ and _____.

STEP 2: PROTECT YOUR HEALTH & ENERGY

	For the Person with Parkinson's	For Care Partners & Support Circle
Medications	Use phone alarms so party noise or travel does not delay doses. Take levodopa 30–60 minutes before heavy, protein-rich meals. Keep a backup pill case in your pocket or bag.	Keep a copy of the current medication list and an emergency dose handy in your bag when traveling together.
Pacing & Rest	Schedule big conversations or outings during your "on" times when medications work best. Build quiet "buffer days" before and after big events.	Help protect downtime on the calendar. Avoid back-to-back commitments so everyone has space to recharge.
Daily Movement	Aim for 15 minutes of gentle stretching, chair exercises, or walking each day to keep stiffness away.	Join in for a short walk together, or take 20 minutes solo to step outside and prevent caregiver burnout.
Environment	Pay attention to early signs of fatigue, noise overload, or unsteadiness, and give yourself permission to step away or leave early.	Scout out a quiet room at gatherings ahead of time, and offer rides or a steady arm in dimly lit or crowded spaces.

STEP 3: SIMPLE SWAPS TO CUT HOLIDAY STRESS

Instead of cooking a huge feast:
Host a potluck where everyone brings a dish, order a pre-cooked holiday meal from a grocery store, or accept an invitation to someone else's home.

Instead of marathon shopping & wrapping:
Shop online from the couch, use festive gift bags with tissue paper, or suggest a family or friend-group "Secret Santa" so everyone buys just one gift.

Instead of decorating the whole house:
Pick three to five meaningful items to display on a tabletop, or invite visiting family or friends to help decorate while you direct from a comfortable chair.

Instead of handwriting dozens of cards:
Send a photo e-card, make a few warm phone calls instead, or use pre-printed address labels and a custom signature stamp.

STEP 4: LEAN ON YOUR CIRCLE & SET BOUNDARIES

Friends, neighbors, and family often want to help, but they may not know what you need unless you tell them.

> ***Quick "Heads-Up" Text Template:*** *"I'm looking forward to seeing everyone! Just a quick heads-up that I tire a bit faster these days and my voice can be softer in loud rooms, so I may head out after two hours to rest."*

- **Keep a Ready-Made "Helper List"** for when people ask, *"What can I do?"*:
  - Pick up groceries, prescriptions, or holiday stamps on their way over.
  - Provide a ride to and from an evening event so you do not have to drive in the dark.
  - Help set up decorations, wrap gifts, or clear dinner plates.
  - *If you have a care partner:* Sit and visit for an hour so your care partner can run an errand or take a break.

Sources & Further Reading

- **Parkinson's Foundation — Your Guide to the Holidays with Parkinson's** (parkinson.org/blogs/tips/parkinsons-holiday-guide): Preparing family, travel planning, and mental health. *Helpline: 1-800-473-4636.*
- **American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) — PD During the Holidays: Our Top Tips** (apdaparkinson.org/dd-f22-article5): Simplifying gifts, virtual celebrations, and accepting help. *Helpline: 1-800-223-2732.*
- **The Michael J. Fox Foundation — Five Ways to Keep the Holidays Happy with Parkinson's** (michaeljfox.org/news/five-ways-keep-holidays-happy-parkinsons): Strategies for pacing, social gatherings, and managing stress.
- **The Michael J. Fox Foundation — Ask the MD: The Holidays and Parkinson's** (michaeljfox.org/news/ask-md-holidays-and-parkinsons): Guidance on medication timing, protein intake, and holiday exercise.
- **Davis Phinney Foundation — 11 Living Well Strategies for Enjoying the Holidays** (davisphinneyfoundation.org/blog/11-living-well-strategies-for-enjoying-the-holidays): Peer tips for low-stress decorating, shopping, and rest.
- **Parkinson Canada — Navigating the Holidays with Parkinson's** (parkinson.ca/navigating-the-holidays-with-parkinsons): Intentional planning, open communication, and adjusting expectations.

This is for informational purposes only. For medical advice or diagnosis, consult a professional. AI responses may include mistakes.