

Living Well *Wheeling Parkinson's Support Group*

Happy New Year!
Wishing everyone a healthy and happy 2026!

****December Meeting**

Our thanks to the December speaker, Jill Spangler, WVU/Wheeling Hospital Nutritionist, for sharing her time and expertise with the group.

****EATING WELL WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

Individuals with Parkinson's disease benefit from a balanced diet that includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, protein, and healthy fats. Proper nutrition improves medication absorption and action, helps maintain bone health, helps keep the gut moving, and improves fitness for people with PD. It is important for those on [Levodopa/Carbidopa](#) to schedule doses around meals, as high-protein meals may interfere with the absorption of the drug or make it less effective. It is important to work with doctors, dietitians, and therapists for meal information, to help manage medication timing, and to address challenges like swallowing problems or appetite changes.

People living with Parkinson's disease [face several challenges when eating](#). One is the motor control we need to select a bite of food and get it to the mouth. Many find that using a large spoon, or even their fingers, makes this easier. There are other products to help with activities of daily living. The Michael J. Fox Foundation offers consumers information on [adaptive equipment](#).

In addition to devices that assist with eating, there are several other areas of assistive devices and technology to help those with Parkinson's ranging from clothing to daily activities to communication. [Assistive technology](#) helps with daily living. Johns Hopkins offers information on [How to Adapt Your Home if You Have Parkinson's](#). Modifications and adaptations can help with independence. The task may need to be modified but may still be do-able with some changes!

[More information is available](#) from the Parkinson's Foundation.

****SPEECH, COMMUNICATION, AND SWALLOWING CHANGES IN PARKINSON'S**

According to the [Michael J. Fox Foundation](#), Parkinson's disease (PD) can affect speech in several ways. The person with Parkinson's may speak at a lower volume and there may be a monotone speech. Speech may sound breathy or the person may sound hoarse. The speed of speech may be affected with some people speaking slower and others speaking more rapidly.

Decreased facial expression can add to the challenge. Non-verbal cues or a flattened affect may send incorrect communication messages. Cognitive issues also can affect speech with problems with word-finding and slowed processing.

Swallowing issues play a big part in nutrition for everyone, and swallowing can be an issue with Parkinson's Disease. [UCLA Health](#) states that difficulty swallowing (or dysphagia) is common in Parkinson's Disease. Symptoms may include but are not limited to an inability to swallow, incomplete swallowing, feeling that food is stuck, regurgitation, and heartburn. Some people with Parkinson's may develop hoarseness or may experience drooling. Aspiration which is when food enters the airways and lungs is a risk with swallowing difficulties. [Speech and Swallowing in Parkinson's](#) is a tip sheet from the Parkinson's Foundation. Consult your primary health care provider and a speech-language pathologist for help with swallowing challenges.

****Free Webinar on Speech Therapy**

Parkinson's Disease can impact speech, swallowing, voice, and facial expressions. The American Parkinson's Disease Association is offering "[Thriving Through Speech Therapy: Understanding Speech, Swallowing, & Voice Changes in Parkinson's](#)" on January 7, 2026 at 3:00pm EST.

Next Meeting – January 23, 2026

Our next meeting will be on January 23, 2026 at 10:30am at Family Service, 2200 Main Street, Wheeling WV. Weather will be a factor over the next few months. Please check with Ann at akoegler1995@gmail.com or Paula at pcalvert@fsuov.com to confirm meeting plans if there are adverse weather conditions.

Our speakers for the January 2026 meeting will be Carol Zombotti and Sara Alig, PhD, West Liberty University Speech-Language Pathology Clinic who will speak on speech and swallowing issues with Parkinson's Disease. They will also have information on West Liberty's Speech-Language Clinic.

****News from Casey Peluso, Western PA Parkinson's Foundation**

Virtual Parkinson's Support Group

The next virtual Parkinson's support group meeting is next week on Tuesday, January 6th at 2:00 PM. Click on the following Zoom link to join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89763230690>

Contacts

Paula Calvert, CEO Family Service UOV – pcalvert@fsuov.com or 304 233-2350

Ann Koegler, Altenheim Resource Services – akoegler1995@gmail.com

Meeting Logistics

The group meets on the 4th Friday of the month at Family Service – Upper Ohio Valley (Ohio County Senior Center) at 10:30am in the conference room. Park on the right side of the building and access the conference room door.

URLs for Article Links

Eating Well with Parkinson’s

Levodopa / Carbidopa

<https://www.parkinson.org/living-with-parkinsons/treatment/prescription-medications/levodopa>

Challenges

<https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/parkinsons-disease-can-cause-swallowing-issues>

Adaptive equipment

<https://www.michaeljfox.org/news/kitchen-assistive-devices-people-parkinsons>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/parkinsons-disease/how-to-adapt-your-home-if-you-have-parkinsons>

More information

<https://www.parkinson.org/sites/default/files/documents/nutrition-2022.pdf>

Speech, Communication, and Swallowing Changes in Parkinson’s URLs

Michael J. Fox Foundation

<https://www.michaeljfox.org/symptoms/speech-swallowing-problems>

UCLA Health

<https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/parkinsons-disease-can-cause-swallowing-issues>

Speech and Swallowing in Parkinson’s

https://www.parkinson.org/sites/default/files/documents/Speech-Swallowing-2024_1.pdf

Free Webinar on Speech Therapy

<https://www.apdaparkinson.org/events/thriving-through-speech-therapy-understanding-speech-swallowing-voice-changes-in-parkinsons/>

Note: Links are provided for those receiving the newsletter through email. The URL is provided for the hard copy of the newsletter for readers to copy into their browser.