

CREW HEALTH ADVICE

Parkinson's Disease: Everything You Need to Know

Parkinson's disease is rarely diagnosed in active seafarers or a cause for medical repatriation. However, Parkinson's is a neurological disorder that affects millions of people around the world. As a result, it is useful to know about Parkinson's, from what it is to how to recognise the warning signs.

What is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's disease is a disorder that affects the nervous system. It causes a loss of dopamine-producing cells in the brain, which affects movement and coordination. Symptoms can include tremors, stiffness, and difficulty with balance and coordination.

Symptoms usually begin gradually and worsen over time. As the disease progresses, people may have difficulty walking and talking. There may also be mental and behavioural changes, sleep problems, depression, memory difficulties and fatigue.

Who is at Risk for Parkinson's Disease?

While Parkinson's disease can affect anyone, some people are more at risk than others. Factors that can increase your risk include:

- **Age:** Parkinson's is more common in people over 60. Young adults rarely develop Parkinson's.
- **Genetics:** Some forms of Parkinson's are hereditary.
- **Gender:** Men are more likely to develop Parkinson's than women.
- **Environmental factors:** Exposure to certain toxins or pesticides may increase the risk of developing Parkinson's at a later stage in life.

Senior seafarers should be more aware of the symptoms of Parkinson's and take

proper medical advice if they experience any of the warning signs (see below). Studies show an early onset of Parkinson's at around the age of 50 years in about 5% to 10% of cases, but this is mostly associated with a genetic disposition to the disease.

As a result, seafarers with Parkinson's in their family should pay further heed to any developing symptoms.

What are the Warning Signs of Parkinson's Disease?

Some early symptoms may include:

- **Tremors:** Shaking in the hands, arms, legs or jaw.

- **Stiffness:** Difficulty with movement and rigidity in the limbs.
- **Slow movements:** Slower movements and difficulty with initiating movement.
- **Impaired balance:** Difficulty maintaining balance and coordination.

Symptoms often begin on one side of the body or even in one limb on one side of the body. As the disease progresses, it eventually affects both sides. However, the symptoms may still be more severe on one side than on the other.

If you notice any of these symptoms, it's important to speak with a medical professional as soon as possible.



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How is Parkinson's Disease Treated?

While there is no cure for Parkinson's disease, there are several treatments that can help manage symptoms. Some medications can help manage the symptoms, while physical therapy can help improve movement and balance. In some cases, surgery may be recommended to alleviate symptoms.

How Can Seafarers Reduce Their Risk of Parkinson's Disease?

While there's no way to completely eliminate your risk of Parkinson's disease, there are some steps you can take to reduce your risk. These include:

- Protecting yourself from environmental toxins and pesticides. This would mean proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on board the vessel, ensuring proper understanding of chemicals and compliance with the MSDS sheets when dealing with them.
- Being aware of the signs and symptoms, and seeking medical advice should they occur.
- Staying physically active to help maintain good balance and coordination.
- Eating a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Getting regular check-ups with your doctor to monitor your health.

In Conclusion

Parkinson's disease is a serious condition, but with awareness and early detection, it can be managed. As a seafarer, it's important to be aware of the risks and warning signs of Parkinson's so you can take action if needed. Remember to take care of yourself, stay healthy and seek medical attention if you notice any symptoms of Parkinson's.



For more information about Parkinson's disease

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

- +1 800-352-9424
braininfo@ninds.nih.gov
www.ninds.nih.gov

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)

- +1 919-541-3345
webcenter@niehs.nih.gov
www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/conditions/parkinson

American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA)

- +1 800-223-2732
apda@apdaparkinson.org
www.apdaparkinson.org

Davis Phinney Foundation

- +1 866-358-0285
info@davisphinneyfoundation.org
www.davisphinneyfoundation.org

Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

- +1 212-509-0995
www.michaeljfox.org

Parkinson Alliance

- +1 800-579-8440
contact@parkinsonalliance.org
www.parkinsonalliance.org

Parkinson's Resource Organization

- +1 877-775-4111
info@parkinsonsresource.org
www.parkinsonsresource.org

Parkinson's Foundation

- +1 800-473-4636
helpline@parkinson.org
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This advice was compiled in collaboration with Future Care & International SOS, which implements health and security solutions to tens of thousands of global clients. We provide commercial vessels with high-quality medical advice and assistance wherever they are in the world, 24/7/365, improving the overall health and wellness of the seafarers on board.

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The Club was the first to launch a crew health scheme in 1996 due to increasing crew illness claims and a lack of accountability of clinics. Since 1996, the Crew Health programme has become one of the Club's leading loss prevention initiatives. The aim of the programme is to reduce the volume and value of crew illness claims which are caused by a pre-existing illnesses or disease. These underlying conditions often impact on the crew member's fitness for service and can endanger not only the health of the seafarer but also the onboard safety of other crew.

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Sophia joined Thomas Miller in 1992 and from 1994 worked as a claims handler dealing mainly with French and Spanish Members. In 2004, Sophia became the Crew Health Programme Director. Sophia has undertaken a large number of clinic audits, implemented the standard medical

form and clinic guidelines. She has also lead the scheme through the largest period of growth and development with a doubling of approved clinic facilities and a four fold member increase. Sophia is a Director of Thomas Miller & Co. Ltd.

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Saidul Alom joined Crew Health from the European Region Service Team in 2004. Saidul provides administrative support to the Crew Health programme and is responsible for liaison with the approved clinics on financial billing matters and ensuring prompt payment of all clinic fees.

Stuart Last

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Stuart joined Thomas Miller in 1998 as a claims trainee for UK P&I Club's Greek Members. In April 2005 Stuart joined Crew Health as the Team Administrator. Stuart is responsible for co-ordination of Member entries and administration for the clinic approval process.