Good Start Guide
Introduction

Parkinson’s disease (PD) is a progressive condition that involves a gradual loss of nerve cells in the brain, leading to problems with movement control and other non-movement-related symptoms.\(^1\)

Symptoms can be treated effectively in most cases with drug therapy; however, as the effects of this therapy wear off throughout the night, patients typically present with poor motor function in the morning when they wake up before the next dose of therapy is due (called morning off).\(^2\) Off episodes are among the most frustrating and challenging complications of Parkinson’s disease.\(^2\)

There are treatment options available to reduce the effects and impact of morning off, as well as other things you can do to help make your mornings more comfortable.

The Good Start Guide provides insight into the challenges faced during the morning off period and offers some tips to ensure a good start to the day.
Waking up

Light-headedness or faintness may also be a problem after lying flat for several hours.

Keeping your first dose of medication nearby on the nightstand will help you to easily reach it upon awakening.

Rigidity and muscle cramps are common upon awakening, which may make climbing out of bed a struggle.

Special roller devices and handles can be fitted to aid with movement during this time.
Using the bathroom

Morning tremors and rigidity can make it difficult to complete simple bathroom tasks such as:
- Showering
- Brushing teeth
- Shaving
- Using the toilet
- Combing hair
- Putting on makeup

These difficulties can mean more time than usual is required.

Secure support systems, including toilet and shower rails as well as chairs can provide stability and reduce the risk of falling.

Electric toothbrushes, cordless razors, and long handled combs, brushes, and sponges can be helpful.

Getting dressed can be a challenge for people experiencing morning off, as muscle rigidity and pain can make simple tasks such as fastening buttons or tying shoe laces incredibly difficult.

Many people choose front-fastening clothes with elasticated waists in stretchy materials, along with Velcro or slip on shoes.

Tools may be helpful – a dressing stick and button hook can help with getting clothes on and fastening buttons, while a reacher or pick-up stick may be useful for picking clothes up or pulling on trousers.
Eating breakfast

Preparing and eating a meal is much more time-consuming during the morning off period.

Morning off can also affect your sense of taste, meaning eating is less enjoyable, however eating a healthy nutritious diet is important for people with Parkinson’s disease.

Eating takes much longer during this time, so food may become cold mid-meal; special keep-warm plates and insulated cups can keep food from cooling quickly.

Tremors may cause accidentally spillage; specialty cutlery and plates, including two handled cups and weighted cups and cutlery may prevent spillage caused by morning off tremors.


