

Vision problems may be common in people with Parkinson's disease

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Immunohistochemistry for alpha-synuclein showing positive staining (brown) of an intraneural Lewy-body in the Substantia nigra in Parkinson's disease. Credit: Wikipedia

Vision and eye problems like blurry vision, dry eyes, trouble with depth

perception, and problems adjusting to rapid changes in light are much more common in people with Parkinson's disease than in people without the disorder, according to a study published in the March 11, 2020, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology. The study also found such problems can influence a person's daily activities.

"It is especially important for people with Parkinson's to have the best vision possible because it can help compensate for movement problems caused by the disease, and help reduce the risk of falls," said study author Carlijn D.J.M. Borm, M.D., of Radboud University Medical Centre in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. "Our study found not only that people with Parkinson's disease had eye problems that go beyond the aging process, we also found those problems may interfere with their daily lives. Yet a majority of eye problems are treatable, so it's important that people with Parkinson's be screened and treated if possible."

The study involved 848 people with Parkinson's who had symptoms for an average of seven years. They were compared to 250 people without the disease. Both groups had an average age of 70.

Participants completed a questionnaire about vision and eye problems. For each problem described, such as "I have a [burning sensation](#) or gritty feeling in my eyes" and "Lines that should be straight appear to be wavy or blurred," participants were asked to choose from a range of four responses. A response of "never have symptoms" was worth one point. A response of "daily symptoms" was worth four points. There were 16 such questions as well as one question about visual hallucinations that required a yes or no response, with yes being worth one point, for a total possible score of 51 points.

Participants were also asked if eye problems interfered with their [daily activities](#) such as driving a car, working on a computer, walking or

[personal care](#).

Researchers found that 82% of people with Parkinson's reported one or more eye problems compared to 48% of people without the disease. The average score on the questionnaire was 10 points for people with Parkinson's compared to two points for people without the disease. Researchers also found that eye problems interfered with [daily life](#) for 68% of people with Parkinson's compared to 35% of people without the disease.

"Eye problems make it more difficult for people with Parkinson's to physically navigate daily life, for example we found that half of study participants experienced problems with reading, and 33% had eye problems that interfered with driving a car," said Borm. "People with Parkinson's who express that they have eye problems should be referred to a specialist for further evaluation. For those who do not express such problems, using a questionnaire to screen for problems that may otherwise be missed might allow for recognition, timely treatment and improving the quality of life."

A limitation of the study was that since people were asked if they would like to participate in the study, it is possible that people with vision problems were more likely to respond, possibly resulting in an overestimation of [eye problems](#).

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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