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Caring for Parkinson's Caregiver tips for an easier today and tomorrow

NEW HAMPTON, NH (March 26, 2014) – A person with Parkinson's disease may visit the doctor for half an hour, four times a year. But what about the care required for the other 8,734 hours each year? Live Free Home Health Care knows that caring for someone with Parkinson's disease can be challenging at any stage of the disease. However, armed with a little information about the disease, caregivers can maximize their loved ones' independence, safety and daily activities.

Parkinson's disease is a neurological disorder affecting the nervous system, which limits some muscle control abilities. It is caused by a slow, gradual loss of cells in the brain that produce dopamine, a chemical necessary for muscles to work normally. Although there is currently no cure for the disease, there are ways to make life more comfortable for those affected.

Maintain a healthy diet

"A well balanced diet can help to reduce cell loss in a person with Parkinson's," said Jason Harvey, Owner of Live Free Home Health Care. "Antioxidants can also help to fight oxidative stress." Sources of antioxidants include blueberries, broccoli, spinach, green tea, dark chocolate, dried fruits and beans, avocado, asparagus, walnuts and almonds, and grape juice or red wine.

Prepare for swallowing difficulties

Persons with Parkinson's often experience difficulties chewing, moving food from one part of the mouth to another, and then swallowing properly to ensure food doesn't enter the lungs. Caregivers should learn from a physician or first aid class how to perform the Heimlich maneuver in case of choking.

Fight constipation

Parkinson's and its medications combine to make constipation a problem. Make sure that the care recipient is consuming plenty of liquids. Some high-fiber foods may cause intestinal gas and cramping that are not tolerated by an older person with Parkinson's. To counter this, nutritionists recommend dried fruits, hot prune juice, canned fruits and soft cooked vegetables.

Prevent falls

Persons with Parkinson's have a difficult time working the various muscles in their arms and legs to stop themselves from falling when thrown off-balance. Modify the home environment to help prevent a fall. Customize seating, toilets, bathtubs, and showers by installing grab bars where appropriate. Remove tables with pointed edges that could cause injury if a stumble occurs.. Also be sure to remove obstructions and hazards in the home such as throw rugs.

Combat anxiety and depression

People with Parkinson's disease often battle depression and anxiety, which can affect short-term memory and concentration and increase a person's motor deficits and physical disabilities. However, depression and anxiety disorders are treatable, so it is important to watch for signs of depression or anxiety and have them properly diagnosed and treated.

Understand medications

Ask the physician about expected side effects of medications so there are no medication-related surprises, such as medications causing hallucinations or nightmares. If the care recipient sees a number of physicians, make sure each physician knows all the medications being taken. This will help prevent unpleasant or dangerous drug interactions.

Encourage exercise

Recent studies suggest exercise can be neuroprotective and may even help "rewire" the brain to some extent. A well-designed exercise program can also increase the benefits of Parkinson's medication, fight depression and promote an overall sense of wellbeing.

On bad days, only do necessary activities

Everyday tasks take longer with Parkinson's, especially on bad days. Allow time for this. Don't pressure the care recipient to speed up, and respond with tact and humor, not irritability and frustration.

Be informed and an informer

Learn all about the causes, symptoms and treatment of Parkinson's disease to be better prepared for the changes in the level of care needed as the disease progresses. Keeping a daily diary and sharing this with the doctor is also beneficial. If one approach to treatment doesn't work well, insist that others be considered.

For more information on providing care for Parkinson's disease or to learn more about respite care so a Parkinson's caregiver can take a regularly scheduled, well deserved break, please contact Live Free Home Health Care at (603) 217-0149.

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About Live Free Home Health Care:

Serving the Lakes Region and Central New Hampshire, Live Free Home Health Care, LLC is dedicated to providing top quality care in the comfort of home, wherever home may be. Family owned and operated, Live Free Home Health Care offers a wide range of services, from companion care and assistance with activities of daily living to skilled nursing. All care is supervised and updated by a registered nurse, who is specially trained to watch for new or changing health issues. Whether the need is for short or long term care, Live Free Home Health Care works with each client's physician to provide a continuum of care unparalleled with other agencies, and the compassionate staff promises to treat each client respectfully and like a cherished family member. Live Free Home Health Care also offers medical alert systems to provide extra peace of mind should an emergency care need arise.

For further information, contact **(603) 217-0149** or visit www.LiveFreeHomeHealthCare.com.