



More than **1**
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April is Parkinson's Disease *Awareness Month*

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, and the already active Parkinson's community gets into high gear to raise awareness of this disease that touches the lives of so many. In fact, you may already be thinking of someone you know who is affected by the disease. More than one million people in the U.S. have Parkinson's disease and that number makes supporting the Parkinson's community even more important. By raising awareness, the hope is to improve the quality of life of those who have been diagnosed and to advance research toward medical breakthroughs – and ultimately, a cure.

What is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's is a chronic and progressive brain disorder of the central nervous system. The motor symptoms – tremor, slowness, stiffness, along with balance and walking issues – result from the death of cells that make dopamine. In

short, dopamine is the chemical that sends messages to the part of the brain that controls movement and coordination.

Men are more likely to be affected by the disease than women. Committing himself to helping increase awareness and research for a cure, actor Michael J. Fox went public with his own struggle with Parkinson's disease. He was diagnosed with young-onset in 1991 at the age of 29. The average age onset is 60, but people have been diagnosed as young as 18. Every nine minutes there is a new diagnosis, which means that in April alone nearly 5,000 people in this country will learn that they have Parkinson's disease.

While the exact cause of the disease is not known, it is attributed to both genetic and environmental factors such as

family history, genetic mutations, drinking well water, and exposure to pesticides or metals.

Parkinson's is a lifelong, progressive disease - meaning that symptoms will slowly worsen over time. In addition to the changes in motor skills, a person with the disease can also experience depression, constipation, sleep issues, pain, and cognitive dysfunction. All this can make activities of daily living challenging. At Assisting Hands® Home Care, we understand how daunting living well with Parkinson's can be for clients and their family caregivers. We have skilled

and compassionate home caregivers who can help them through the routine of daily living.

While there is no cure for Parkinson's disease, prescribed medications, surgery, along with healthy lifestyle choices such as diet and exercise can alleviate some of the symptoms. Alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, may provide relief from symptoms as well. By taking an active role, those with Parkinson's can live a full and active life for many years.



The many benefits of tai chi for seniors

If you're new to exercise, or looking for a new form of physical fitness that's extremely easy on your body's joints, tai chi may be just the thing for you! Dating back over 2,500 years, tai chi is often times described as "meditation in motion," as it's believed to be able to clear your mind and reduce your stress through focused concentration.

Tai chi is an ancient martial art from China that incorporates a series of slow, controlled weight shifting body rota-

tions and semi-squat exercises with deep breathing techniques. This low-impact, slow-motion exercise is found to be incredibly safe. Its circular movements keep muscles relaxed while putting minimal strain on bones and joints. Another benefit of tai chi is that it can be adapted for every age and fitness level, including seniors and people with very limited mobility – even those confined to wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

Regular practice of tai chi's gentle, physical exercise can improve muscle strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance. Addressing these fitness components may help with age-related issues such as muscle loss, symptoms of arthritis and other joint pain, and breathing problems in-

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cluding chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD). Tai chi exercises can help with arthritis and joint pain by helping retain range of motion, so they don't stiffen further.

Tai chi can help increase leg strength and overall balance, which is essential to helping seniors stay steady on their feet and avoid falls. This practice helps with core stability, which also improves balance. A study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* found tai chi to be effective for balance in people with Parkinson's disease and other neurological problems. By targeting leg strength, flexibility, range of motion, and reflexes, tai chi's exercises may help you feel sturdier on your feet and, in turn, ease the fear of falling.

Any type of movement that gets seniors off the couch and moving can be of a great benefit both physically and mentally. Exercise of all kinds can improve cognitive functioning – and despite being a less aerobic form of exercise – tai chi has been shown to have brain benefits as well. Another study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* reported that tai chi is linked to increases in brain volume, delayed dementia, and found individuals that practiced tai chi regularly showed improvements on tests of memory and thinking.

Tai chi's deep breathing meditation techniques can help relieve stress and improve feelings of overall well-being.

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9	2				4			
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The calming, meditative body movements can help improve breathing efficiency, circulation, and sleep, as well as lower blood pressure and prevent heart disease.

One more great thing about tai chi is that no special equipment is needed. A skilled teacher can easily adapt movements to fit every age and fitness level. Taking a tai chi class – either indoors or outdoors – is a great way for seniors to socialize with their peers. Contact your local recreation or senior center for available classes. As always, check with your healthcare provider before beginning any new exercise routine.



Sudoku:

The aim of Sudoku is to complete the entire grid using the numbers 1-9. Each number can only be used once in each row, once in each column, and once in each of the 3x3 boxes. This puzzle is challenging!

Visit www.krazydad.com for further tips and help about how to play – and good luck!

Sudoku puzzle courtesy of www.krazydad.com



Creamy Lemon Parmesan Chicken

Serves: 3 **Prep time:** 10 min **Total time:** 40 min

Ingredients

- 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 3/4 c. freshly grated Parmesan, divided
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- Zest of 1/2 lemon
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 c. baby spinach
- 1 c. heavy cream
- 2/3 c. low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 lemon, sliced in rounds and halved
- 1/4 c. thinly sliced fresh basil

Instructions

- On a large plate, combine flour with 1/4 cup Parmesan, garlic powder, and lemon zest. Season generously with salt and pepper and mix thoroughly with a fork. Dredge each chicken breast on all sides with flour mixture. Set aside.
- In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil until shimmering but not smoking. Add chicken and sear until golden, 6 minutes. Flip and cook until opposite side is golden, around 6 minutes more. Remove from pan and set aside.
- Turn heat down to medium and add butter to pan. When butter is melted add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add spinach and cook until wilted, 1 to 2 minutes. Add chicken broth, cream, and remaining 1/2 cup Parmesan and season with more salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Add lemon slices and bring to a simmer and cook until thickened slightly, 3 to 4 minutes. Return chicken to skillet and simmer until chicken is cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes more.



- When chicken is cooked, remove skillet from heat and garnish with basil before serving.

Banana Pudding Poke Cake

Serves: 10-12 **Prep time:** 20 min **Total time:** 45 min

Ingredients

- Cooking spray, for pan
- Flour, for pan
- 1 box yellow cake mix, plus ingredients called for on box
- 2 boxes vanilla pudding mix
- 3 c. milk
- 2 c. heavy cream
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 bananas, thinly sliced
- 20 Nilla Wafers, 4 crushed

Instructions

- Make cake: Preheat oven to 350° and grease and flour a 9"-x-13" cake pan. Prepare yellow cake mix according to box instructions. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 25 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, prepare pudding: In a small bowl, whisk together pudding packets and milk until thick.
- In another large bowl, beat cream, sugar, and vanilla until stiff peaks form.
- Using the handle tip of a wooden spoon, poke holes all over the cake. Spread pudding mixture on top and top with a layer of banana slices. Spread whipped cream on top and sprinkle all over with crushed and whole Nilla Wafers and more banana slices.