

Staying positive (support groups)

Living with Parkinson's or caring for someone with Parkinson's is full of challenges, but you don't have to feel alone. Parkinson's Victoria currently operates 50 support groups throughout metropolitan and rural Victoria.

A support group is an informal gathering of people who share similar experiences, situations or problems. *Parkinson's Support Groups* offer members a chance to meet and talk with others while offering each other emotional and practical support. Besides helping you realise you are not alone, a support group gives you a chance to share your feelings and hear the experiences of others.

Meetings are informal and friendly, and new members are always welcome. Parkinson's support groups are ideal for people living with Parkinson's, their carers, friends and family members.

Support groups encourage the growth of knowledge. By knowing more about Parkinson's through the experience of others, and through professional resources, you will discover new ways of dealing with your own symptoms and challenges.

Support groups can help you renew your sense of hope in dealing with changes to your lifestyle, and offer you the chance to make new friends.

What to expect

Support Group meetings typically involve:

- Group discussions and sharing experiences, information, practical tips and advice on living with Parkinson's
- Visits from the Parkinson's Victoria Health Team
- Social activities and day excursions
- Guest speakers are also invited to meetings to discuss topical and relevant subjects. These may include occupational therapists, social workers and doctors.
- Parkinson's Support Groups also offer a range of support and information resources which members can access.

Parkinson's Victoria Support Groups use a self-help model and are not therapy groups. (If you are seeking a counselling therapy group, please contact Parkinson's Victoria for a referral). Our support groups are run by volunteers who may also be a health professional from your local area, a person living with Parkinson's or a carer.

Support Groups appeal to a range of people for a variety of reasons. Some members like to be very active and involved in the planning of meetings and activities, other members prefer to simply enjoy the company.

Staying positive (support groups) *continued*

Support Groups vary in their makeup, from the number of members, to the age and interests of the individuals.

When you join a Support Group meeting, you may meet people who have had Parkinson's a lot longer than you. You'll definitely meet people who have had different experiences to yours. Don't be afraid. No two people with Parkinson's are ever the same and it's important to remember that everyone's journey is unique.

To find out where your nearest Parkinson's Victoria Support Group is, contact Parkinson's Victoria.

NB: While members may discuss their experiences of Parkinson's during meetings, it is important to remember that everyone has different symptoms and will respond differently to treatments. Professional advice should be sought before altering any treatment