

TASK SPECIFIC TRAINING

People with Parkinson disease (PD) have difficulty performing daily activities. Task specific training is a helpful way to improve your ability to do daily tasks by practicing those specific activities. Research shows that task specific training should be included as a part of your therapy or home exercise program.

It is important that you have adequate strength and balance to safely perform these tasks. Your physical therapist can help determine if you are able to perform these activities in a safe manner or if you need any special equipment or devices to assist you.

What are common activities task specific training can address?

Examples of common activities that task specific training can address include:

- Dressing
 - Getting in and out of bed or car
 - Standing up from various surfaces
 - Dual tasking (doing two things at the same time)
 - Dexterity (manipulating objects with your hands)
 - Turning
 - Housework
 - Stairs
 - Fall prevention
 - Bladder training
- Activities that require multiple steps can be difficult and require more thinking to perform correctly.
 - If these activities are hard for you but you can do them, you should practice them often to improve your performance, making the task easier over time.
 - Practicing the task in your head before trying to do it can also help.

What are some examples of task specific training?

DEXTERITY: Activities like dressing eating, manipulating small items (earrings, necklace clasps, medicine tablets, etc) may be difficult. Your therapist can help you find devices and teach you strategies to make activities like writing, dressing, and eating easier.

TURNING: When turning, people with PD can experience freezing episodes, loss of balance, or may require multiple steps to complete a turn. Repeatedly practicing turning in 90-degree increments, called “clock turns” can make it easier to turn.

DUAL TASKING: Have you ever tried walking and chewing gum at the same time? That is an example of dual tasking, in other words, doing two things at the same time. With PD, doing two things together can become increasingly difficult and may even cause slowing of walking or freezing. Practicing the tasks alone in pieces and then together may make these things easier. Consult your therapist as this type of practice may not be beneficial in later stages of the disease.

FALL PREVENTION: Task-specific training aimed at decreasing falls can be beneficial in those with earlier stages of PD. Practicing fall safety and how to get back up from the floor with your therapist can be beneficial. Your care partners may be included in this instruction so that they can help you at home to rise safely.

BLADDER TRAINING: Bladder control (urgency and frequency) can be a problem in PD. Task-specific training for bladder management can be helpful to address urgency (the feeling of having to go immediately), which can improve your quality of life. Physical therapists can assist with strengthening the muscles around your bladder. In some cases, you may need to see a pelvic health specialist (also called pelvic floor therapists).

What if I can't do the activity successfully?

- Consult a physical therapist to help create a plan to work on your strength and balance so that you can learn to perform an activity safely.

How often should I do task specific training?

- You will probably need to see the therapist for 2-3 days a week for approximately 4-6 weeks to meet your activity goals.
- You will need to practice these activities at home as instructed by the therapist.

Anything else I should know about task specific training?

- The most important thing is to be safe. Performing activities with your therapist and with the help of a care partner can help reduce the risk of fall or injury.
- Be consistent in your training, practice lots of repetitions of the activity, and make sure you use high effort.
- If an activity is really easy, ask yourself if you are doing it correctly. Demonstrate the activity for your care partner and have them check your work.
- Your therapist is also there to help you. Let your therapist know what activities you want to practice so you can all work together to meet your goals.