About Tremors

A tremor is trembling or shaking which may affect your arms, legs, head, or even your voice and speech. Tremors are often seen in people who have multiple sclerosis (MS) or Parkinson’s disease.

Types of Tremors

- **Intention tremor** - This type of tremor occurs when reaching for something, grasping an object or when you move your hand or foot with purpose. The shaking may increase as you get closer to your target, such as when you reach for a cup. There is no shaking when a person is at rest. This is the most common type of tremor for people with MS.

- **Postural tremor** - No tremors occur when lying down, but shaking occurs when sitting or standing.

- **Resting tremor** - Tremors are greatest when the body is at rest. This type is more common in Parkinson’s disease than in MS.

- **Eye tremors** called nystagmus.

What causes tremors?

Tremors occur because there are damaged areas along the nerve pathways. These pathways control coordination of movement. People with MS who have tremors may have problems with speaking or swallowing because these activities require coordination of movement also.

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Learn more about your health care.
How do you treat tremors?

Tremors are hard to treat. Several medicines are used with some success.

- Buspar, a brand of buspirone, an anti-anxiety drug
- Klonopin, a brand of clonazepam, an anti-anxiety drug
- Atarax, a brand of hydroxyzine, an antihistamine
- Inderal, a brand of propranolol, a beta-blocker
- Mysoline, a brand of primidone, an anti-convulsive drug

Occupational therapy can provide suggestions on how to change or adapt household items to lessen tremors. For example, adding weights to pens, eating utensils, brushes, canes or walkers can increase control. Adding extra weight to an ankle or wrist can sometimes ease the tremors. Arm and hand braces may also work well for tasks like eating or writing.

Deep brain stimulation has been used to manage tremors in Parkinson’s disease. Electrodes are placed into various parts of the brain during surgery. This type of treatment is being tested in patients with MS.

- Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.