

HEALTH BULLETIN

Parkinson's Disease and micrographia

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Writing disorders are frequent with persons living with Parkinson's disease. Often, it is one of the first signs of the disease. They are often shown with a writing that becomes smaller and smaller, called "micrographia".

We can find, amongst others things:

- A reduction of the size of the letters gradually as the hand progresses towards the end of the word or the end of a line;
- A reduction of the space between letters or words;
- Lack of fluidity;

As micrographia is a motor disorder associated with akinesia (complete or partial lack of movement) and with rigidity, the speed of writing, the size of the characters and the readability of the words may be affected at various degrees. Writing is slowed and may stay readable. However, it may become irregular even illegible.

Micrographia may however become a source of functional incapacity in daily activities and prevent communication, which may lead to a loss in independence, a loss of identity and social isolation.



In order to recuperate a functional handwriting, it is recommended that a speech therapist and an occupational therapist take over. Specific exercises soliciting muscular relaxation, wrist and fingers movement coordination, and re-education of the writing movements may help to slow the progression of this phenomena.

Therapists insist on the exaggeration of the range of movements as well as the size of the letters to trace. Other suggested exercises put torso muscles and upper members to work in order to improve the sitting posture.

When writing becomes too difficult, the speech therapist may propose other strategies, such as:

- Replace cursive writing by writing in block letters;
- Choose pens that may increase fluidity or the writing, for instance a large and heavy pen would help the grip and reduce shakiness;
- Use lined or graphic paper to help with a better alignment and a better regularity when writing;
- Use alternate tools for writing such as a computer or a dictation machine if writing difficulties are too important.

Taking charge of the writing is essential to maintain communicability and patient autonomy. It is very important to write regularly and to continue to communicate in writing.

Here are some tips and tricks:

- Take your time, do not hesitate to stop and relax at the end of a line or a sentence.
- If the writing becomes too small, stop and continue again after a pause.
- Use bigger pens in order to have a better grip.
- Exercise on different surfaces regularly, using varied and stimulating material.
- Prefer paper with lines.
- Ask for help to fill forms, so you will only have to sign.
- Think about your posture.
- Think about writing big!

It is possible to contact a speech therapist or an occupational therapist through your CLSC, private clinic or your regional rehabilitation center.

Sources :

Guide infoparkinson

<http://www.mirabelle-park.fr/espace-patient/communication/en-quoi-consistent-les-troubles-de-lecriture>