



LEVODOPA AND PROTEINS

Levodopa continues to be the “gold standard” for the treatment of Parkinson’s disease, and nearly everyone is prescribed this medication.

Levodopa is found in a variety of formulations including:

levodopa and carbidopa referred to as levocarb or levodopa/carbidopa (Sinemet® and Sinemet®CR);

levodopa and benserazide (Prolopa®);

levodopa/carbidopa/entacapone (Stalevo®).

Some people taking levodopa notice a decrease in the effectiveness of their medication if it is taken at, or close to, the same time as a high protein meal or snack. For those people, eating a protein-rich food at the same time as taking their levodopa reduces the absorption and effectiveness of the medication. However, not everyone with Parkinson’s disease has this problem.



P A R K Ì N S O N QUÉBEC

1 800 720.1307
info@parkinsonquebec.ca

To find the appropriate resources,
visit the Info Centre Parkinson at

parkinsonquebec.ca

© Parkinson Québec, 2018

Source: Parkinson Society British Columbia • Adapted by Parkinson Québec

LEVODOPA AND PROTEINS



Daily
LIVING

P A R
K Ì N
S O N
QUÉBEC

1 800 720.1307 • parkinsonquebec.ca

WHY DOES PROTEIN SOMETIMES INTERFERE WITH THE ABSORPTION OF LEVODOPA?

During the digestion process, proteins break down into amino acids, their basic elements. The lining of the digestive tract contains many receptors designed to absorb the amino acids and to transfer them into the blood stream to be carried to the brain.

There are only so many receptors in the digestive tract. Since amino acids and antiparkinsonian medication are absorbed by the same receptors, a competition between the two occurs. Effectiveness of the medication may then be reduced.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Medication effectiveness can be different for everyone. For some, it may seem as though it is taking a very long time for the medication to “kick in”. Others may feel symptoms are not controlled as usual by the medication. In some instances, you may feel the dose taken does not work at all.

If you are concerned about your ability to absorb levodopa, we recommend that you discuss this with your healthcare team. Prior to your appointment, it is useful if you can take notes about the effectiveness of your medication.

When you take your medication please note:

if you have food with your medication and what was in your main meal and/or your snack;

how close your medication intake was to a main meal;

effectiveness of your medication before and after eating.

Even if you suspect that protein is getting in the way of adequate absorption of levodopa, you must not make adjustments to your medication schedule without talking to your physician. Effective management of Parkinson's medications requires following a strict schedule. Adjust your meals and snacks, not your medication.

SHOULD I HAVE A SNACK ALONG WITH MY LEVODOPA?

Opinions differ on this question, but it is generally considered wise to have a light, non-protein snack along with your levodopa to aid with digestion.

Foods to consider include:

fruit;

crackers;

apple sauce.

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I AVOID WHEN TAKING LEVODOPA?

Foods that are high in protein to avoid (in large servings) include:

high protein milk products including yogurt, ice cream, butter, cheese, and cottage cheese (a small quantity in coffee or tea, or in cereal is usually not a concern);

almond milk, soy milk, hemp milk and rice milk;

eggs and egg substitutes (an egg should not cause a problem, but should not be combined with bacon and sausages);

meats, poultry and fish of all types;

nuts including spreads like peanut butter;

sunflower seeds and all other seeds such as pumpkin, flax, and sesame;

beans, peas;

soybeans including tofu and tempeh;

puddings and custards;

dietary supplements as well as whey and protein powders (Ensure® and other similar products have a high percentage of protein).

Protein is essential for good nutrition and good health. If you find that protein does interfere with the absorption of levodopa, do not cease to eat them unless instructed to do so by your physician. Instead, reschedule your meals and snacks around your medication schedule. Normal amounts of these protein rich foods may be taken one hour before or an hour after your scheduled medication time.

