

Strategies for Thawing Freezing During Walking

What is Freezing of Gait (FOG)?

People with Parkinson Disease (PD) often experience Freezing of gait (FOG). This is the feeling that your feet have become stuck to the floor, and it is difficult for you to take a step. Sometimes freezing can make it so that you cannot take a step at all. Other times you may take fast, small, shuffling steps, also known as festinating gait.

What are Common Triggers of FOG?

Different movements and environments can trigger freezing. It is important to identify your triggers. Try to determine the triggers of your freezing and develop strategies minimize the frequency and duration of the freezes.

Most often, freezing occurs when you are first starting to walk, when you are turning, or when you go through a doorway. Some people find that freezing occurs in tight spaces such as: corners, crowds, a narrow walking path, or when there is clutter on the floor. Changes in the flooring, such as going from hardwood to carpeting, may also trigger a freeze. Stress can cause freezing to worsen, such as feeling pressured to walk quickly across a busy street. Timing of Parkinson’s medication (end of dose or wearing off) can also affect FOG severity.

What are Common Cueing and Movement Strategies to Reduce FOG?

There are common cues and movement strategies that can be used to prevent or shorten FOG. It is helpful to work with a Physical Therapist to determine which strategy will work best for you. It is also important to discover your triggers so that you can begin your cueing or movement strategy before you freeze.

Cueing Strategy	Description	Example
Amplitude (Moving Big)	PD tends to make movements smaller. If you think BIG and try to exaggerate your movements, they will become more normal size	Think about taking BIG steps and exaggerate your arm swing
Rhythmic Auditory	Using a rhythmic sound or beat to move or step to	Use a metronome application on a smart device or rhythmic music-based sounds set to your cadence (step rate); practice counting out loud (1.2.3..), singing or having a song in your head, or saying right-left
Visual	Visual cue, such as stepping on or over a visual line or target on the floor	Try stepping on an object or over a target such as a taped line on the floor or an imagined object. Attach a laser to your cane or walker or carry one as you walk. The light from the laser creates a target on the ground for you to step over.

Movement Strategy	Description
Don't push through a FOG event	Allow yourself to practice the pause method when FOG occurs before your next step to consider using one of the above-mentioned methods. Keep practicing!
4 S's	To get out of a freeze: Stop Stand tall Sway (step backward or sway shift side to side before stepping) Step big
Sway or weight shifting strategies	It can be difficult to initiate a sway. Some cues that could help you initiate your sway could be to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing • Step backwards and then forwards • Side step or rock back and forth • Perform a marching step • Have a care partner provide cue like a tap on your foot Work with your physical therapist to find a cue that works for you.
Clock turning	When turning, pretend you are standing in the middle of a virtual clock. Intentionally lift your leg high as you step to point on the "clock." Step to 12-9-6 when turning to the left. Step to 12-3-6 when turning to the right. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
Reduce dual-tasking	If you find that dual-tasking while walking worsens your FOG and leads to imbalance, try to focus on 1 task at a time.

Do Assistive Devices Help with Freezing?

Use of a cane or walking won't prevent freezing, but they can keep you stay safe by preventing a loss of balance and falls. Work in conjunction with your Physical Therapist to try different assistive devices to find what works best for you in this stage of your PD.