

Driving when you have Parkinson's disease

For most people, driving represents freedom, control and independence. Driving enables most people to get to the places they want or need to go. For many people, driving is important economically – some drive as part of their job or to get to and from work.

Driving is a complex skill. Our ability to drive safely can be affected by changes in our physical, emotional and mental condition. The goal of this brochure is to help you and your health care professional talk about how Parkinson's may affect your ability to drive safely.

How can Parkinson's disease affect my driving?

Parkinson's disease can cause your arms, hands, or legs to shake – even when you are relaxed. It also can make it harder for you to keep your balance, or start to move when you have been still. If you have Parkinson's and you try to drive, you may not be able to:

- ◆ react quickly to a road hazard;
- ◆ turn the steering wheel; or
- ◆ use the gas pedal or push down the brake.

Can I still drive with Parkinson's?

Most likely, “Yes,” in the early stages of the disease, and if you take medicines that control your symptoms.

What can I do when Parkinson's disease affects my driving?

Ask your doctor about medicines and surgeries that could help treat your symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Ask about the affect medicines may have on your continued ability to drive safely.

Staying fit and active will help maintain your muscle strength that you need to drive. This will help keep you safely behind the wheel and on the road.

Your doctor also can refer you to a center or a driver rehabilitation specialist who can give you on and off-road tests to see if, and how, your Parkinson's is affecting your driving. The specialist also may offer training to improve your driving skills if your Parkinson's still allows you to drive safely.

Improving your skills could help keep you and others around you safe. To find a driver rehabilitation specialist near you, go to www.aota.org/olderdriver and look up the name of a specialist in your State. You also can call your local hospital and rehabilitation facility to find an occupational therapist who can help with the driving skills assessment and remediation. Depending on where you live, you may need to travel to nearby communities to find these services.

What if I have to cut back or give up driving?

You can keep your independence even if you have to cut back or give up on your driving. It may take planning ahead on your part, but planning will get you to the places you want to go and the people you want to see. Consider:

- ◆ rides with family and friends;
- ◆ taxi cabs;
- ◆ shuttle buses or vans;
- ◆ public buses, trains and subways; and
- ◆ walking.

Also, senior centers, and religious and other local service groups often offer transportation services for older adults in your community.

Who can I call for help with transportation?

Call the ElderCare Locator at **1-800-677-1116** and ask for your local Office on Aging, or go to their website at www.eldercare.gov.

Contact your regional transit authority to find out which bus or train to take.

Call Easter Seals Project ACTION (Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation) at **1-800-659-6428** or go to their website at www.easterseals.com/transportation.

Where do I find out more about Parkinson's?

Your first step is to talk with your health care professional. You also can contact the:

 American Parkinson Disease Association
1-888-400-2732
www.apdaparkinson.org

 The National Parkinson Foundation
1-800-327-4545
www.parkinson.org

 American Academy of Neurology
1-800-879-1960
www.aan.com

 Parkinson's Disease Foundation
1-800-457-6676
www.pdf.org

 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
1-800-352-9424
www.ninds.nih.gov

You also can get a copy of "Age Page On Older Drivers" from the National Institute on Aging by calling 1-800-222-2225, or by going to their website at www.niapublications.org/engagepages/drivers.asp.

Wear your safety belt

Always wear your safety belt when you are driving or riding in a car. Make sure that every person who is riding with you also is buckled up. Wear your safety belt even if your car has air bags.

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American Parkinson Disease Association



The National Parkinson Foundation



U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

www.nhtsa.dot.gov
nhtsa
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