

Driving with PARKINSON'S DISEASE



Driving with PARKINSON'S DISEASE



In general terms patients with Parkinson's disease are able to drive as long as they are physically and psychologically in a fit state so to do. We all take personal responsibility only to drive when we are able to - this applies to people with Parkinson's in the same way as it does to the general population. If your doctor recommends any special precautions, restrictions or advice against driving, then you should adhere to his (her) advice. Most areas have access to driving tests for people with disabilities. **It is a condition both of holding a driving licence, and of motor insurance that one satisfies this responsibility. You must inform your insurers and the DVLA of your diagnosis.**



There has recently been some controversy over whether some drugs are more likely to make people with Parkinson's sleepy and therefore unable to drive. Although scientific evidence is poor, we are all subject to these symptoms under certain circumstances - the following are some helpful hints that we hope will guide you over this issue.



Firstly, if you are feeling sleepy at any time you must not drive.

This is most likely to occur if you have been short of sleep. Some common reasons for this include a broken nights sleep, night cramps, any breathing disturbance, insomnia due to anxiety, or a period of stress. Other medicines can also cause drowsiness and warnings not to drive (e.g. for hay-fever, depression, sleep disturbance or anxiety etc). Patients have learnt to cope despite these problems by following the following simple advice.



Be aware that although one may experience an intense drowsiness, there is no support for the notion that this will occur suddenly - ***there is time to recognise the warning signs (such as the feeling that your eyelids are very heavy) and you must pay attention to these warnings.***

Driving with PARKINSON'S DISEASE



The time at which you are most likely to feel drowsy can be altered by daily events. For example it is most likely in the evenings, or after a tiring day. It can also occur after meals, or at other times when relaxed or tired. It is most likely to occur when you are feeling tired and in familiar surroundings and particularly if the car heater is turned up, and on long drives, for example on dual carriageways or motorways. It is therefore sensible to avoid long drives, particularly at night, or at other times when you may be more inclined to feel drowsy.

IF YOU SHOULD FEEL AT ALL TIRED YOU SHOULD ALWAYS -

- Stop the car in a safe place, such as a lay-by or service area.
- Lock the doors, remove the keys from the ignition and if possible, move into the passenger or back seat.
- You should then have a sleep until you wake up naturally. This might be only ten minutes, or might be an hour or more, depending on how much of a sleep deficit you have. When you wake up you should feel refreshed and able to drive. **If this is not the case and you still feel drowsy, do not drive.**



It is of course sensible to drive with another passenger who is a driver but this is not always convenient or possible.



If ever you have any doubts about your ability to drive it is safer not to drive and please do not take any risks. You may want to discuss this with your doctor or specialist nurse. As always, safety is our highest priority.

**We hope this information and advice is helpful to you.
If you do drive, make sure you drive safely!**

Driving with PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Changes to your health

If you have a medical condition that may affect your driving you **must** inform the Drivers Medical Unit (DVLA) Swansea. You can notify your medical condition by telephone and fax . When contacting DVLA remember to quote your full name, date of birth and/or driver number (if known), and medical case number if you have one . Advise them of your specific condition in order that you can be sent the appropriate medical questionnaire. For further information contact DVLA direct.

Mobility Centres

Mobility Centres offer assessment of driving capability, advice on eligibility to drive, where to learn, the selection and purchase of vehicles and adaptations, exemption from excise duty and parking or financial concessions for disabled drivers. For the centre nearest you check editions of Yellow pages under the section headed 'Disabled information and services' or contact MAVIS.

Further information can be obtained from:

Parkinson's Disease Society UK

215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ
Tel 0207 931 8080, Fax 0207 233 9908, Helpline 0808 800 0303
website www.parkinsons.org.uk

DVLA

Drivers Medical Group, Swansea, SA99 1TU
Phone: 0870 600 0301 (Monday to Friday 8am to 5.30pm, Saturday 8am to 1pm)
Fax: 0845 850 0095, www.dvla.gov.uk/drivers/dmed1.htm, e-mail: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

Department of Transport

Mobility Advice & Vehicle Information Centre (MAVIS)
Department of Transport, TRRL, Crowthorne, Berks, RG11 6AU
Tel: 01344 661 000