

Driving and Parkinson's

Pd can affect the ability to self evaluate and it is advised that driving be discussed with family members and your doctor. They may have a different perception of your driving skills.

In the early stages of Pd drivers often modify their driving habits to address the changes outlined above. This may be achieved by driving shorter distances and avoiding peak hour traffic and night time driving. If they drive a manual car, it may be sensible to convert to an automatic car.

However, as the condition progresses, problems may develop which could result in impaired driving performance. These may include:

- Reduced physical reaction time
- Impaired problem solving
- Fluctuation in physical symptoms
- Tremor
- Fatigue
- Difficulty attending to dual/multiple tasks
e.g. radio, passenger, traffic
- Problems with concentration
- On/Off phenomenon

Insurance Regulations

It is preferable that you inform your insurance company of you being diagnosed with Pd (it is not mandatory). In some cases failure to disclose this information may result in invalid insurance.

Driving, Parkinson's and Medications

Just as sight impaired persons must wear their glasses when driving Pd drivers must take their medication as prescribed when driving. It is not always possible to predict whether a medication

will affect driving, but some medications can affect driving ability. Reactions to medications vary between individuals and you may not realise that a medication is affecting your driving.

When commencing a new medication check with your doctor and pharmacist that it is safe to drive. Some warning signs are:

- Drowsiness and fatigue
- Dizziness, light headedness and fainting
- Nausea
- Unclear thoughts
- Unsteadiness
- Change in mood, e.g. aggressiveness

Alternative Transport Options

- **Government Transport Concessions**
Telephone 13 12 44
www.seniorsinfo.nsw.gov.au
- **Contact your Local Council**

Further Inquiries

NSW Roads and Traffic Authority
Telephone 13 22 13
www.rta.nsw.gov.au

Parkinson's NSW
PO Box 71, North Ryde BC, NSW 1670

Telephone 02 8875 8900
Free InfoLine 1800 644 189

pnswn@parkinsonsnsw.org.au
www.parkinsonsnsw.org.au



Parkinson's Disease and Driving

For most people being able to drive a motor vehicle is a very important part of their daily life – for maintaining social contact, for getting to and from work, and for accessing their everyday needs such as food and services. Driving may also be essential to employment.

RTA Requirements

NSW law requires the holder of a driver licence to notify, as soon as practicable, the RTA of any long term injury or illness that may impair his or her ability to drive safely. The RTA must be satisfied that all licence holders are medically fit to drive. A licence holder can be directed to have regular medical examinations because of a medical condition.

When you report your illness it does not necessarily mean that your licence will be taken away. It does mean that the RTA can work with you and your doctor to manage your condition with respect to your driving.

Who makes the Rules?

The rules about health and driving are developed by medical experts and are agreed to by the RTA. Your doctor does not make the rules but provides advice about how your health condition might affect your ability to drive safely and how it might be managed. The RTA always makes the final decision about your licence status.

Will your doctor notify the RTA?

As the relationship between you and your doctor is a confidential one, your doctor will not normally communicate directly with the RTA. He or she will provide you with advice about your ability to drive safely as well as a letter or report to take to the RTA.

Doctors also have an obligation to public safety so your doctor may notify the RTA directly if he or she feels your condition poses a significant threat to public safety.

What happens if you don't follow your doctors advice?

If you continue to drive despite your doctor's advice and you do not report your condition to the RTA, you are not fulfilling your legal responsibility. If you are involved in an accident under these circumstances and it is found that your health condition was a contributing factor, you may be prosecuted.

Medical Examinations

If you are required to have a medical examination, the RTA will send you a letter with a medical report form approx. eight weeks before you are due for a medical examination.

Specialised Driver Assessment and Retraining Service

Drivers with Pd may require a driving assessment by a suitably qualified occupational therapist before a licence will be issued or reissued.

The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service employs Rehabilitation Consultants who provide assessment and training in many locations throughout NSW as part of their rehabilitation programs.

www.crsaustralia.gov.au

Alternatively, you may choose to arrange your own driving assessment by a suitably qualified occupational therapist. To help with this option, a list of recognised therapists is available from the Australian Association of Occupational Therapists NSW.

Telephone (02) 9648 3225

www.otnsw.com.au

Concerned about the driving of a relative or friend?

If you know a licence holder whose health might be affecting his/her ability to drive safely, it is important to get them to talk to their doctor. If they are unwilling to discuss this with a doctor, you should contact the RTA who will deal with the matter confidentially.

For many people giving up their right to drive can be a serious and upsetting step. Make sure that their driving skills really are unsafe. Do not mistake cautious and courteous driving for reduced ability to drive.