

Driving

Driving allows personal freedom, fosters a sense of control, and maintains independence for individuals living with Parkinson's.

While many people can continue to drive safely after a diagnosis, it's essential to recognise the potential impact of Parkinson's progression on movement, thinking skills, vision, and wakefulness.

Can I still drive with Parkinson's?

Yes, individuals with Parkinson's can still drive, but it's a medical condition that needs to be declared, requiring notification to the transport authority in your respective state or territory. Check your state or territory website for necessary forms for a GP or neurologist to fill out and file ASAP. Failing to disclose may lead to consequences such as insurance issues, legal liabilities, or driving offences. Check with your insurance what is required.

Driving is a complex task and Parkinson's-related physical, emotional, and mental changes may affect your ability to drive safely. You may wish to find an Occupational Therapist (OT) to assist you to maintain your confidence and suggest ways that would enable you to stay driving safely for longer.

"Driving is a very difficult topic of conversation with family and medical people. It is very personal and very emotional, because it is so bound up with being independent as well as helpful."
Person living with young onset Parkinson's

How will my driving be affected?

Parkinson's symptoms like slowness and stiffness can impact your reaction time, muscle control and coordination. Fatigue may impact your concentration, vision, and ability to multitask. Parkinson's also impacts your perception of distance and speed. Stress may exacerbate any or all these symptoms and impact your ability to:

- react quickly to a road hazard
- turn the steering wheel with control
- push down on the gas pedal or brake as quickly as you may need to
- change lanes or park your car.

Common Parkinson's medications may also have side effects that can affect driving such as sleepiness, dizziness, blurred vision, and confusion. Some of these side effects may be lessened by simple medication adjustment. Speak with your Parkinson's Nurse Specialist or GP. However, not everyone experiences these symptoms or side effects.

Regular reviews of driving ability

You are required to complete an assessment on your fitness to drive with Parkinson's with your treating medical professional. During these reviews you may have:

- a referral for an assessment of your driving by a qualified OT.
- licence restrictions such as driving distance or daylight hours.
- suggested vehicle modifications to assist with specific aspects of driving.

"You need to be well aware of your body, your interaction with your medication, and the importance of being tuned in to your body and its response to medication." Person living with young onset Parkinson's (PLWYOP)

How do I know if I can still drive safely?

It may be difficult to determine if or when you should limit your driving. Here's some tips:

- Don't drive if another person can.
- Take public transport when possible.
- Don't drive when 'off'.
- Don't drive after consuming alcohol as you cannot predict how it will react with your medications.
- Ask a trusted friend or family member for honest input about your driving.

"People with Parkinson's who are safe to drive and feel confident driving should absolutely be supported to keep driving if they wish, and we need to be aware and open to the idea of giving up when the time is right." PLWYOP

Australian Disability Parking Permit

You may wish to apply for a permit through the Australian Disability Parking Scheme (ADPS) which is recognised nationally. All enquiries about permit applications, cost, eligibility and use should be directed to the relevant State or Territory authority. Permit holders can park in spaces marked as disability parking spaces and access particular parking concessions.

Alternatives to driving

If you must cut back on or give up your driving, you can still maintain your independence. There are many options including public transport, accessible taxis, and companion driving services. Consult the Driving alternatives infosheet to help identify which form of transportation best suits you.

Who else can help?

You can download the free Young Onset Parkinson's eXchange (YOPX) app through your Apple Store or Google Play to access helpful tips and strategies from people living with young onset in Australia around:

- choosing the right car
- technology and assistance
- confidence and anxiety
- licence provisions
- driving tests and feedback
- retiring from driving when the time is right.

Find the Driver licensing authority contacts for your state or territory, a *Driver Patient factsheet* and the *Assessing Fitness to Drive* at austroads.com.au

Disability services are available to help you locate transportation options:

www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/transport

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/mobility-allowance

Know your responsibilities

For more information on your responsibilities as a driver with Parkinson's, please contact the transport authority in your state. Austroads has information that can help.

Don't forget to speak to your insurance provider to make sure you meet their requirements to maintain your cover.

Infosheet kindly reviewed by Occupational Therapy Australia.

To find an OT go to: www.otaus.com.au

