

For most people, driving represents freedom, control and competence. 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 checklist is to help you and your health care professional talk about how Parkinson's disease (PD) may affect your ability to drive safely.

### How can PD 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 my PD?

- Most likely, yes, in the early stages of the disease, and if you take medicines that control your symptoms. *But realistically there may come a time when you can no longer drive safely and you need to plan ahead for this possibility.*

### What can I do when my PD 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 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 specialist near you, call the Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists at **1-866-672-9466** (toll free in the US & Canada) or go to their website at [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net). You also can call your local hospital and rehabilitation facility to find an occupational therapist who can help with the driving skills assessment.

### 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
- 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](http://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.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org).

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 <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/drivers.htm>

**Wear your safety belt and make sure everyone with you does too!**