

TIP SHEET

Travel and Transportation



Leaving the home for medical appointments, family events or other activities can be a cumbersome process for a person with advanced stage Parkinson's. These outings are sometimes needed, and often add to quality of life, so it is important to consider methods that promote safety and decrease caregiver stress.

Traveling to Medical Appointments

- » **Try to schedule appointments at times when your loved one is rested** and PD medications are most likely to be working well.
- » If endurance allows, **schedule a few appointments on the same day**, especially if they are located in the same clinic or medical complex.
- » **Pack a small bag** with your loved one's pill box, liquids, snacks and/or incontinence pads if you will be away from home for a while.
- » **Make sure that the person with Parkinson's is adequately dressed for the climate** when leaving the house. Regardless of weather, you might want to bring a small shawl or lap blanket.

Getting In and Out of the House

- » **Outside stairways should have sturdy railings in place.**
- » **If your loved one cannot negotiate steps, consider installing a ramp.** Make sure you work with a professional who understands the slope needed for safe walking or wheelchair transport – it should not be too steep.



Watch the CareMAP videos

Travel and Transportation, Parts 1 and 2

Online at caremap.parkinson.org

Travel by Car

Your car will likely be your main form of transportation, so it is important to be comfortable and capable of getting the person with Parkinson's and his or her assistive devices into and out of the vehicle.

- » **Make sure the person with Parkinson's moves close to the car with proper body alignment**, turning to sit down safely on the car seat before attempting to move legs into the car. (See the video, *CareMAP: Travel and Transportation Part 1*, on caremap.parkinson.org for a demonstration.)
- » **Place a slippery satin-based fabric square or cushion on the car seat** to make it easier for the person with Parkinson's to move and get positioned.
- » **Obtain adaptive equipment** to make car travel easier:
 - A portable handle can be slid into place to serve as an arm rest, allowing “push off” during transfers.
 - A seat belt hand grasp allows the person to more easily reach across and grab the belt to pull it across the body.
 - A seat belt extender makes the seat belt easier to align and lock into place.
- » **Practice putting your loved one's walker or wheelchair into the trunk or back seat** of your vehicle before the day of the outing to make sure you know how to lift it safely. Practice will also make sure it fits in your car. Electric wheelchairs or scooters are generally not portable enough to be stored in a standard car trunk, which may limit the ability to use them outside the home. Some people choose to rent or buy a larger vehicle and install an electric lift, but these are expensive and not an option for everyone.
- » **Consider getting a walker you can fold for transport and a transport wheelchair for outings.** Transport chairs are lighter and more portable than standard wheelchairs but are not designed to be used for heavy or continual use.
- » **A physical therapist** can help you find the right items and show you how to use and lift them.



Using Medical Transportation Services

If the person with Parkinson's needs to stay in his or her wheelchair for transport, consider contacting a medical transportation service to get to appointments. These services are available in many parts of the country, and some offer sliding fee scales based on your financial situation. Most services will allow one family member to accompany the person during transport.

- » **Take time to learn the company's processes** for scheduling, pick-up and drop-off service.
- » **Keep the company's contact information with you** and call promptly when you are ready to go home. Be prepared for some waiting time. Make sure you have your loved one's pill boxes and other essentials in case the ride is late.

Travel by Plane

Airline travel requires pre-planning. Make sure you know all the details before setting out.

- » **Call ahead** to make sure you get aisle or bulkhead seats if you need the extra space.
- » **Make arrangements ahead of time** for transport assistance to your gate.
- » **Avoid checking walkers or wheelchairs with luggage.** Use them until you arrive at the gate, and request that they be returned to you when you exit the plane.
- » **Be prepared for travel delays:** always carry extra medications and other essentials in your carry-on luggage.
- » **Tell the gate agent you need extra time to get seated.** You will usually be allowed to board first.

Special Events

While it may be difficult to get there, family events and other social activities can maximize quality of life and keep connections strong for the person with PD.

- » **Before you go,** make sure the destination is accessible and support is available during the visit.
- » **Enlist other family members and friends** to help arrange transportation.
- » **Consider a shorter visit** to avoid fatigue, or make sure there is an opportunity to rest when needed.

For other tip sheets and caregiver support information, order the NPF book Caring and Coping.