

Driving & PD

What you need to know



There will come a time when it will be necessary to stop driving.

Driving is seen as a sign of independence and freedom and the thought of it being taken away can be crushing. You may feel like you are losing part of your identity and that this step means you become completely dependent on others, but it doesn't have to! There are other ways to get around that don't involve asking friends and family to drive you everywhere, though they are less convenient. Learning to use public transit can be stressful but it may help to regain some feelings of independence. The decision to stop driving is not an easy one for the driver or family members from both practical and emotional perspectives. However, when driving is no longer safe it is important to stop before an accident occurs.

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How does PD affect driving?

PD can affect driving in many ways from your ability to multitask to your reaction time being slowed down. Tremors in legs and/or arms may affect steering, breaking, and accelerating.

It is important to take notice of these things if they are happening and make the hard decision to stop driving for the safety of yourself and others.

Tips for driving

- Drive only when your medications are working – this may mean planning ahead!
- Remove all distractions while driving – no radio, keep noise level in car to a minimum
- Choose familiar routes
- Avoid driving in bad weather
- Avoid driving at night
- Drive only when well rested
- Keep to the speed limit and maintain a safe distance from other cars
- Avoid driving for long stretches at a time

Sometimes the person with PD doesn't recognize they are no longer safe to drive. This is a sensitive topic. Talk with your doctor about any concerns you or your family have about driving.

If you want your driving assessed, services like DriveABLE will objectively assess your driving abilities. The information is sent to your physician who will share the results with you.

Suggestions for alternative ways to get around:

- Rides from family or friends
- Use of public transportation
- Use of taxi cabs – often less expensive than owning a car unless you drive >6,000 km per year!
- Walking (if possible)
- There may be organizations – religious, seniors' groups, community service organizations – that provide rides for those without cars