

Driving and Parkinson's

Living with Parkinson's can affect many drivers, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you will be unable to drive.

Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition, characterised by both motor (movement) and non-motor symptoms.

Most people wish to continue driving for as long as possible. Driving can be important for maintaining social interactions and independence, as well as providing a sense of freedom and enjoyment.

Part of your responsibility as a driver is ensuring you remain capable of driving safely. Your safety when driving may be impacted by illness, disability, certain medical conditions or medications. It is a legal requirement to report your Parkinson's diagnosis to the licencing authority who issued your driver's licence.

You may need to have more regular health checks to ensure your Parkinson's is well managed. To continue driving, there may need to be some conditions or restrictions placed on your licence.

The complexity of driving

Driving is a complex task that requires perception, good judgement and reasonable physical capability.

Cognitive abilities such as attention, scanning, memory, concentration, spatial awareness, coordination, anticipation and responsiveness are

used in combination with one's physical ability to safely enter and exit the vehicle, fasten a seatbelt, steer, perform head checks and manage foot and hand controls.

Symptoms and driving

Some symptoms of Parkinson's that may influence driving ability or make driving more challenging might include:

- Slowed movements
- Muscle rigidity
- Involuntary movements
- Changes in hand dexterity
- Motor fluctuations
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Concentration difficulties
- Difficulty with multitasking

Your legal responsibilities

Reporting your condition to your licensing authority

All states and territories in Australia have agreed to the rules surrounding health and driving.

You are legally required to report any permanent or long-term illness that is likely to affect your ability to drive safely to your local licensing authority. A diagnosis of Parkinson's falls into this category. Failure to report your diagnosis may jeopardise your insurance cover and potentially put lives at risk.

Reporting a condition does not necessarily mean your licence will be taken away.

Process for reporting

To report your condition, a medical report needs to be submitted (most commonly online) to your local licensing authority

Only certain health professionals can make a formal recommendation regarding your fitness to drive; these professionals are listed in your State or Territory road transport legislation ('Assessing Fitness to Drive'; Appendix 3.2).

Your treating healthcare professional will assess your health and ability to drive safely and submit a medical report indicating whether you meet the medical standards to drive a vehicle, as specified in a national publication; 'Assessing fitness to drive' ([Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive](#)).

The health professional confirms:

- your medical condition/s
- whether you meet the medical standards to drive
- whether you undergo an on-road driving assessment

The health professional most commonly able to submit a medical report is your local doctor. You may like to book a longer consultation than usual to discuss this.

What if I drive a commercial vehicle?

It is important you also inform your treating healthcare professional if you drive a commercial vehicle, such as a truck or public passenger vehicle. Even if you don't meet the health standards to drive a commercial vehicle, you may still be able to continue driving a private vehicle.

Can someone report concerns about your ability to drive safely?

If a family member or someone in your community has concerns about your ability to drive safely, they can report their concerns to

your State or Territory licensing authority. This can be done anonymously and will likely result in a request for you to submit a medical report.

Motor vehicle insurance

In addition to notifying the licensing authority in your State or Territory, it is recommended that you check the "duty of disclosure" clause of your motor vehicle insurance policy.

It is difficult to say how disclosing your diagnosis will impact your insurance premium, as all insurers are different, but make sure you check the fine print of your policy.

The licensing authority will determine next steps

The driver licensing authority considers the advice provided in the medical report and will make the final decision about your licence status. They will inform you of any further steps required. Possible recommendations may include:

- Continue driving, with the requirement to submit periodic medical reports
- Undergo a specialised occupational therapy driving assessment
- Suspension or cancellation of licence

What happens if I need an on-road driving assessment?

You may be required to have an **occupational therapy driving assessment**. This is with a specialised Occupational Therapist (OT) who has an extra qualification as a driving assessor.

There are two parts to this assessment:

- Off-road: Medical history, driving history, vision and hearing checks and road law knowledge

- On-road: Dual-control car, with an instructor in the front passenger seat and OT Driving Assessor in the rear passenger seat

The OT Driving Assessors role is to evaluate your ability to continue to drive safely, legally and independently. They provide advice on how your Parkinson's could impact your driving and make recommendations for how to manage and monitor any issues identified.

Some possible recommendations may include periodic reviews, driving at certain times such as daylight hours only or off-peak times, driving locally within a certain radius of home, or modifications to the vehicle such as alternative controls. Some recommendations may result in a **conditional licence**.

In more rare instances, if there are significant safety concerns, an OT can recommend a licence suspension or cancellation.

Can I appeal a decision?

Information about appealing licence decisions is available through your State or Territory licensing authority.

Accessible Parking Permits

Accessible Parking Permits enable people with certain conditions, disabilities or impairments to park in accessible parking bays or to park in standard parking bays for double the time displayed on the parking sign.

You may be able to apply as a driver, a passenger or as both.

Depending on your State or Territory, these may also be referred to as disability parking permits.

All application enquires should be directed to your relevant State or Territory Authority (refer below for weblink).

Further Information:

Austroads - www.austroads.com.au

'Driving and health: Your questions answered' publication: [Austroads: Driver Patient Fact Sheet](#)

Assessing Fitness to Drive for commercial and private vehicle drivers (2022): [Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive](#)

State and Territory licensing authorities:

Australian Capital Territory

Access Canberra

www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au

New South Wales

Transport for NSW

www.rms.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory

Motor Vehicle Registry

www.nt.gov.au

Queensland

Department of Transport and Main Roads

www.tmr.qld.gov.au

South Australia

Department for Infrastructure and Transport

www.sa.gov.au

Tasmania

Department of State Growth

www.transport.tas.gov.au

Victoria

VicRoads Medical Review

www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/medical-conditions-and-driving/medical-review

Western Australia

Department of Transport

www.transport.wa.gov.au

Australian Disability Parking Scheme:

[Australian Disability Parking Scheme; State and Territory websites](#)

Fight Parkinson's is a leading source of specialised health information and advice services. Through research, education and support, we strive to improve the lives of people living with Parkinson's, PSP, MSA and CBS.

Any medial information provided is for general information purposes only. You should always talk to your treating doctor and qualified healthcare providers for personal medical and health-related instructions.

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