

PARKINSON'S and DRIVING

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There are many aspects of driving that require consideration for the person who is diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

1. LEGAL ISSUES :

Since May 1999, Victorian law has stated that as soon as is practicable after persons with Parkinson's are diagnosed, they are required to advise the Medical Review Section of VicRoads of their diagnosis and submit a medical report stating that they are capable of driving. Thereafter, VicRoads will ask for an annual medical report on their capacity to continue to drive. The persons' GP is usually the best doctor to write these reports.

The VicRoads address is :

Medical Review
VicRoads Registration and Licensing
60 Denmark Street
KEW 3101
Tel. (03) 9854 2666

It is recommended that a copy of this medical report be also sent to the car's insurer so that in the event of an accident the insurer will be aware that the person with Parkinson's is a competent driver.

2. DRIVING ASSESSMENT

Sometimes it may be difficult for a doctor or health professional to assess if the person with Parkinson's is a capable driver. In these circumstances it is recommended that the person undertakes a VicRoads approved occupational therapy driving assessment. A list of OT assessors is available from VicRoads. This assessment includes both an off road / theory test and an on road driving assessment that takes place

with the OT and a driving instructor. A report with recommendations is then sent to VicRoads. The cost for this assessment is met by the person undergoing the test.

3. PARKINSON SYMPTOMS AFFECTING DRIVING

Some of the Parkinson's symptoms that may interfere with driving are :

- difficulty doing more than one thing at a time, such as when negotiating a roundabout while listening to a passenger's conversation.
- rigidity affecting head checks and trunk rotation when reversing.
- slow or abnormal movements that can interfere with the use of pedals and handbrakes.
- tremor can affect the person's ability to control the vehicle.
- slowed reaction times could be dangerous in an emergency situation.
- reduced awareness of position of limbs may affect automatic use of brake and accelerator.

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