

Treatment Information

Driving with Arthritis

Driving with Arthritis

Arthritis may affect your driving because you have painful joints, stiffness, muscle weakness and have a tendency to tire more easily. You may have limited movement e.g. in the shoulders or neck.

Some aspects of driving you may find difficult:

- getting in and out of the vehicle, opening/closing doors
- putting on seat belt, manipulating keys
- controlling the steering wheel, using pedals, operating gears and handbrake
- turning your head to give adequate view at junctions

Points to consider when driving

- ensure you are seated comfortably, adjusting the seat and steering wheel when possible
- aim to minimize strain on your joints
- if you have neck instability and have been supplied with a neck collar this should be worn at all times when traveling in the car
- use your medication to give maximum relief of pain and stiffness e.g. take before a journey providing they do not cause drowsiness
- plan your journey, have frequent rest stops to ease stiffness and fatigue

You must not drive

- if you cannot safely control the vehicle e.g. if pain is severe or get dizzy when turning your head
- If you are sedated by the effects of your medication or feel your judgment is impaired by your medication
- you must be confident you can perform an emergency stop

Adaptations that may help:

- Automatic transmission reduces the strain on upper limb joints, enables both hands to remain on the steering wheel and is less tiring to operate.
- Power assisted steering also reduces the strain on upper limb joints, is easier for parking and it is possible to get tailor made low resistance power steering.
- Additional mirrors help compensate for painful or restricted neck movement. Vision can be improved by using interior wide angled mirrors and additional wide angle wing and blind spot mirrors.
- Electric windows, central and remote locking and adaptation to secondary controls e.g. indicators.
- Modification of handbrake or car keys using an enlarged or extended handle may help.

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- A padded steering wheel may make it easier to grip.

What the law says:

- you must inform your insurance company that you have arthritis
- you must inform the DVLA if your arthritis affects your ability to drive safely. The medical rules for driving are outlined in the DVLA publication INS57P and a reminder of your obligation is printed on your driving license.
- you must inform the DVLA if you have modifications to the controls of your vehicle.
- you are not exempt from wearing a seat belt.

Sources of help:

Motability Scheme. This charity helps drivers and passengers with a disability to obtain a vehicle – either lease or hire purchase. To be eligible you need to receive the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance. Details from:

Motability Centre

Goodman House
Station Approach
Harlow, Essex
CM20 2ET
Tel 01279 635666

Members of the Forum of Mobility Centres provide a full assessment of your needs and offer impartial advice regarding vehicle choice and adaptations. There is a charge for this service but some adaptations can be very costly so it is recommended that you seek sound advice at an early stage.

The nearest centres are:

Banstead Mobility Centre

Damson Way
Orchard Hill
Queen Mary's Avenue
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 4NR
Tel 020 87701151

Mobility Advice and Vehicle Information Service (MAVIS)

Department of Transport 'O'wing
Macadam Drive
Old Wokingham Road
Crowthorne
Berkshire
RG45 6XD
Tel 011344 661000

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Oxford Driving Assessment Centre
Mary Marlborough Centre
Windmill Road
Headington
Oxford
OX3 7LD
Tel 01865 22760

Contact Details

If you have any further questions or need advice about your treatment phone the Rheumatology Advice line on

01202 442849.

www.poole.nhs.uk/our_services/rheumatology.asp

For further health-related information, please contact:

The Health Information & Resource Centre

Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Longfleet Road
Poole
BH15 2JB
Telephone: (01202) 448003

Rheumatology Practitioners

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We can supply this information in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. A member of staff will be happy to discuss this with you. Please call PALS on 01202 448499 or the Health Information Centre on 01202 448003 for further advice