

Most people own a vehicle and drive regularly to work, errands and social activities. In our active world, driving allows personal freedom, control and independence. Some people express concern over the impact Parkinson's may have on their driving. It is wise for each individual to consider the following options to ensure they maintain optimal driving safety.

### **On the Road:**

- Eliminate distractions while driving. Listening to the radio, talking on a cell phone or eating/drinking while driving all affect concentration and reduce driving safety.
- Avoid nighttime driving if affected by vision changes in reduced light settings.
- Choose familiar, comfortable routes and non-peak hours if stressed by traffic or map reading. Consider a GPS system if directions prove difficult.
- Be aware that Parkinson's can cause slow movement, and reduced reaction times. Reduce driving when fatigued or if feeling that medications are not working optimally.
- Do regular stretching exercises for neck and trunk to enhance mobility when backing up, or when watching for traffic/other obstacles.
- Maintain good posture by using a lumbar support cushion to reduce back strain.
- Car pool with others when possible to reduce driving stress.
- Consider taking an "over 55" defensive driving course, offered by AAA, AARP, and other agencies. Completion of these courses often lowers auto insurance premiums.
- Ask a trusted friend or family member to provide honest input about your driving skills.

### **Involving Your Team:**

Consult an occupational therapist to assess and provide recommendations to improve your flexibility, reaction time, vision, and other essential physical components for safe driving. An occupational therapist can also provide input into your individual abilities to handle complex driving situations. Following initial screening results, behind the wheel driving assessment can be arranged for those who feel they are experiencing greater difficulty.