

Parkwood Hospital

Driver Assessment and Rehabilitation Program

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DRIVING WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Multiple Sclerosis can affect individuals in varying ways including tingling, numbness, slurred speech, blurred or double vision, muscle weakness, poor coordination, unusual fatigue, muscle cramps, bowel and bladder problems and paralysis. Due to these symptoms, special equipment or accommodations may need to be made to aid a person in safely maintaining their mobility independence for as long as possible.

Physical Considerations: The following are considerations for selecting a vehicle:

Driving a sedan: The Individual must be able to do the following:

Open and close the Door

Transfer in and out of the vehicle

A wheelchair/scooter must be able to be stored and retrieved. Special equipment is available to aid with storage.

Driving a Van: Options may include a mini-van with a lowered floor and a ramp or a full size van with a lift. Specialized modifications allow a person to transfer to the driver's seat or drive from a wheelchair. Technology may be able to compensate for the loss of strength or range of motion such as:

- Reduced effort steering and/or brake systems to compensate for reduced strength.
- Mechanical hand controls allow for operation of the gas and brake using upper extremities.
- Servo brake/accelerator systems compensate for reduced strength/range of motion of arms.
- If spasticity is difficult to manage, it may lead to an inability to drive.

Visual Changes:

- May be severe enough that driving is precluded or night driving is prohibited.
- If double vision is intermittent and can be monitored independently, then driving may be limited to avoid driving during an exacerbation.
- Sunglasses may help with glare sensitivity.
- Compensate for loss of peripheral vision with special mirrors and head turning.
- Learn order of traffic signals to aid with color vision impairment.

Cognitive Issues:

- Need to regulate emotions and avoid driving when upset, angry or overly emotional.
- May be limited to familiar routes if some loss of memory or problem solving but still enough judgment to drive.

Decreased Energy:

- Energy conservation is vital.
- May require assistance with wheelchair loading to save energy for driving.
- Air conditioning aids with managing warm climates.