



Parkinson's and road safety

Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a chronic, neurodegenerative disease resulting of the death of cells in the midbrain's substantia nigra. Its clinical evaluation is based on the presentation of resting tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia and abnormal posture.

In industrialized countries, Parkinson's is the second most-prevalent neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's disease, 15 percent in elderly and up to 50 percent in persons over 80 years of age. As of its diagnosis, its symptoms and prognosis entail a major impact to the quality of life of patients and caretakers.

Some keys

1

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 40 million people are affected by Parkinson's Disease and that approximately 30 percent more have not yet been diagnosed.

2

To date, there is no medication that halts the progression of Parkinson's. Basic treatment includes the administration of substances, exercises to increase concentration, or surgical treatments to improve motor functioning.

Symptoms

>> **Resting tremor:** hands, feet, face, jaw, muscles of the tongue and, sometimes, the head.

>> **Abnormal movements:** Bradykinesia, akinesia and hypokinesia. Face and distal muscles.

>> **Rigidity:** Up to 90 percent of patients. Unstable posture. Results in increased falling.

Among the risk factors for its development, age and family history of PD are the leading risk factors.

Regulations and impact

According to statistics, 2 out of 10 persons with PD continue driving. The General Regulations for Drivers in Spain places Parkinson's within the section referring to the nervous and muscular systems and sets forth that:

"There must be no serious loss or decrease of motor or sensory functions and of coordination, fainting, tremors with major oscillations or spasms that cause significant movements of the head, trunk or members, nor tremors or spasms that may involuntarily affect control over the vehicle."

Progressive motor disability

With a delayed psychomotor response, imprecision and abnormal coordination (poor control of the pedals, difficulty in controlling the hands) and excessive fatigue.

Medication for Parkinson's

Group N - Nervous system. Subgroup N04. These may have intense effects on driving ability: drowsiness, sudden sleep onset and decreased alertness.

6 Road safety recommendations for drivers with Parkinson's Disease



Shorter journeys, more accompaniment
Reduce the hours spent driving and have someone else accompany you in the vehicle, whenever possible.



Same as ever
Choose uncomplicated routes you are familiar with.



Precaution
Avoid driving at night, during traffic peak times and in adverse weather conditions.



Stop if necessary
If you notice that you are tired, have abnormal movements, impaired coordination, etc., slow down and stop the vehicle safely.



Request advice!
There are mechanisms that facilitate driving (power steering, steering wheel knobs, etc.) The Regional Traffic Authorities and Driver Examination Centers can offer you guidance.



Be frank
Being frank with your doctor is critical to reach an agreement as to your ability to drive depending on your disease and the impact of your medication on your motor skills.