



# Driving and AS (Ankylosing Spondylitis)



## Many people with AS continue to drive

With the appropriate adaptations and driving techniques, even someone with a completely fused neck can drive safely.

## AS and driving safety

You may well find an increase in pain and stiffness during prolonged periods of driving. So, on long journeys it is important to make frequent stops to stretch. Use a small cushion behind your back to help maintain a good position.

Make sure your vehicle is fitted with correctly adjusted head-restraints as even a relatively small impact can be serious for people with neck problems.

## AS and the DVLA

The law requires you to tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) about any condition that may affect your ability to drive safely.

### *The advice given by the DVLA about AS is that:*

- If your AS does not affect your safe driving you do not need to tell the DVLA about your AS
- If your AS affects your safe driving you will need to tell the DVLA
- If you are unsure whether your AS affects your safe driving you will need to check with your GP or rheumatologist who will be able to advise you

The DVLA might typically consider that AS was affecting your safe driving if you need adaptations to your car to be able to drive safely such as extra mirrors, or if you felt you could only safely drive a car with automatic transmission.

### *Stage 1*

Once you have decided that you should inform the DVLA about your AS you are normally asked to fill in a medical questionnaire to give more details about your condition. This may not be needed if you are applying for a lorry or bus licence and you have provided a medical examination report (D4) with your application.

You can download form G1 from the DVLA website or pick up a form from your local post office.

You will be asked to give your permission for a medical advisor from the DVLA to ask for medical information from your doctor if needed.

### *Stage 2*

If it is possible a decision on the information you have provided will be made. If more information is needed, a medical advisor may:

- Contact your doctor or consultant (or both)
- Arrange for you to be examined by a local medical officer or specialist
- Ask you to take a driving assessment, eye test or driving test

### Stage 3

Once the medical advisor has all the information he or she needs, a decision will be made about your licence by the DVLA. They will use the medical standards of fitness to drive to help with the decision.

- You may be able to keep your licence or get a new one
- You may be given a driving licence for a period of one, two or three years if the medical advisor decides that your medical fitness needs to be reviewed in the future
- You may get a driving licence which states that special controls need to be fitted to the vehicles you drive so you can overcome the effects of a physical disability
- Your licence may be withdrawn or your application withdrawn. This only happens when the DVLA enquiries confirm that, as a result of your medical condition you are not fit to drive

### Help with safe driving from the Forum of Mobility Centres

The Forum of Mobility Centres are a network of 17 independent organisations covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, who offer professional, high quality information, advice and assessment to people with any medical condition which might cause issues with safe driving.

You can be referred for an assessment by the DVLA or you can call your local centre to make an appointment for an assessment. Do bear in mind that if you are referred by the DVLA you will not be charged but if you contact them independently there is a charge.

For people with AS, the mobility centres might offer advice on fitting additional mirrors, driving an automatic rather than a manual and on devices to help with getting in and out of cars. The aim of the mobility centres are to give help and advice on driving safely NOT to stop people driving.

The Forum of Mobility Centres has some great advice on their website on the vehicle adaptations available, including information on additional mirrors.



## Motability

The Motability Scheme can help you with leasing or buying a car if you're getting the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Even if you do not drive yourself, you can apply for a car as a passenger and propose two other people as your drivers.

Through the contract hire scheme you can lease a new car supplied by a Motability accredited dealer for at least three years. Insurance, routine servicing and breakdown assistance are included. You may need to pay for the fitting and removal of any adaptations.

You can apply if you have 12 months or more of your Disability Living Allowance

award remaining. If your award is not renewed during the full length of your chosen scheme, your car will need to be returned.

At the end of the period, the car is returned to Motability Operations who operate the car schemes under contract to Motability.

Alternatively, hire purchase enables you to buy the car you want. This can be a new or used car. You are responsible for negotiating the purchase price of the car with the dealer and arranging insurance cover. At the end of the hire purchase agreement - which can be between three and five years - you will own the car.

## The Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme allows people with severe mobility problems who have difficulty using public transport to park for free. This means badge holders can park close to where they need to go. The scheme operates throughout the UK.

You are automatically eligible to apply for a badge if you are over two years old and either:

- Receive the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance
- Are registered blind
- Receive a War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement.

You may also be eligible for a badge if you are over two years old and either:

- Have a permanent and substantial disability which means you cannot walk, or which makes walking very difficult.
- Drive a motor vehicle regularly, have a severe disability in both arms, and are unable to operate all or some types of parking meter (or would find it very difficult to operate them).

Your local council is responsible for issuing Blue Badge parking permits so contact them for more information.

### Useful websites

Directgov motoring information

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring)

DVLA

[www.dft.gov.uk/dvla](http://www.dft.gov.uk/dvla)

Forum of Mobility Centres

[www.mobility-centres.org.uk](http://www.mobility-centres.org.uk)

Motability

[www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)



The NASS HELPLINE  
is open 09:00 to 12:00 Monday to Friday

CALL 020 8948 9117

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