

HINTS AND TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S

Accessible Britain Guide

This is a really useful – and free! – downloadable ebook edition of a guidebook on disabled-accessible venues, destinations and attractions throughout the UK.

Download it from here: www.accessibleguide.co.uk/downloads/Accessible-Britain-eBook-2016.pdf

Airports – mobility assistance

Most airports offer special assistance (eg: wheelchairs; golf carts; expedited immigration/customs clearance; priority boarding; help with luggage etc) for 'passengers with reduced mobility' who request it.

Bear in mind that the walk from the check-in counter to the boarding gate (or between gates at a transit stopover) can be really far – and you may already be tired and/or stressed from your journey so far, even if it was just getting to the airport from your home.

Aberdeen Airport: <https://www.aberdeenairport.com/aberdeen-airport-guide/special-assistance/>

Edinburgh Airport: <http://www.edinburghairport.com/prepare/special-assistance>

Glasgow Airport: <http://www.glasgowairport.com/im-departing/passenger-info/> (click on the section named 'special assistance')

Also – be sure to inform your airline (when booking your trip) that you will need assistance.

Airports – security

Please remember to take all your meds with you, in their original packaging, along with an official letter from your GP stating they are your prescribed meds. If you use a dosette or pill dispenser, do not fill them up until you reach your destination. Although you shouldn't have any problems within the EU, many countries farther afield actually ban the importation of (and/or criminalise the possession of) many prescription drugs, including some key Parkinson's meds.

In larger international airports (eg Amsterdam Schiphol), I have in the past been taken aside for questioning due to my shaking at the security checkpoint. The staff are only doing their job however – and to be honest, it must look suspicious to someone not familiar with Parkinson's – but they were apologetic when I explained the reason for my shaking. Remember that Parkinson's symptoms (especially motor symptoms) tend to worsen when you are stressed, tired or nervous – which describes most people when they are flying!

Benefits

Your first point of contact for enquiries regarding benefits and entitlements should be your Parkinson's UK local adviser, who will be able to tell you which benefits you are entitled to and assist you in applying for same.

For a list and contact details of Parkinson's UK Local Advisers, see:

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/helpline-and-local-advisers>

At the very least, people with Parkinson's should apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which is designed to help with some of the extra costs associated with a long-term disability or illness. PIP is not means-tested and can be applied for whether you are working or unemployed. PIP is replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and all new applications are now assessed under PIP criteria. Those already receiving DLA will be transferred to PIP in due course.

You may also be able to get Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if you cannot work because of your Parkinson's.

More details about financial help/benefits available to disabled people can be found here: <https://www.mygov.scot/disability-benefits-help/> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled>

Blue Badge

If you receive the Higher Rate of the Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or certain types of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you may be able to apply to your local council for a Blue Badge.

The Badge is valid for three years and your council may levy a charge of £20 for its issuance.

Note that you can use your Blue Badge in **any** car you travel in, whether as a driver or passenger, as it belongs to the disabled person and not the vehicle.

See: <https://www.mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge/> for further information and <https://bluebadge.direct.gov.uk/directscotapply.html> to check your eligibility.

Blue Badge – use in Scotland

Blue badges in Scotland permit you to park for free and without time limit in council car parks and on-street parking. You can also park on single or double yellow lines, so long as you do not obstruct traffic. You may NOT however park in resident's permit holder spaces; on zig-zag lines (eg outside schools or at pedestrian crossings); on 'red routes' (in Edinburgh) or in spaces marked 'loading only'.

- Many **tourist attractions** also offer free parking to Blue Badge holders: eg Stirling Castle (normally £4); the University of Stirling campus (normally 'pay and display') and the Kelpies (normally £3).
- **Aberdeen Airport drop-off:** Blue Badge holders are entitled to a 30-minute free period within the main Short Stay car park. Blue Badge holders using the 30-minute free period within the Short Stay car park should present their Blue Badge card for validation at the Customer Service Office when leaving the car park. The Customer Service office is located on the exit route of the car park.
- **Edinburgh Airport drop-off:** follow signs for 'paid drop off' and at the exit, just press the 'assistance' button at the barrier and tell the operator you have a Blue Badge – they will then open the barrier for you, so you do not have to pay.

- **Edinburgh Airport pick-up:** follow signs for 'multi-storey car park' and at the entrance, keep in the right-hand lane for 'paid pick-up' – park in a designated Blue Badge space. You then need to take your Blue Badge and your ticket to the parking office in the ground floor of the multi-storey car park. The attendant there will issue you with a new ticket which will enable you to exit the car park. You are entitled to the first hour free; after that, normal car park charges apply.
- **Glasgow Airport drop-off and pick-up:** Drivers with a Blue Badge should use the short stay car park (Car Park 2) opposite the terminal building, where they get up to 30 minutes' free parking for pick-up/drop-off. The disabled/Blue Badge spaces are on the ground floor, and (like pick-up in Edinburgh Airport) you will need to take your Blue Badge and your ticket to the parking office in the ground floor of the multi-storey car park. The attendant there will issue you with a new ticket which will enable you to exit the car park.

Blue Badge – use in England & Wales

In England and Wales, you are limited to three hours' parking at a time and you must display the cardboard 'clock' (showing your arrival time) alongside the Blue Badge.

Blue Badge – use in European Countries

This useful website has information for (most) European countries on the use of (and restrictions pertaining to) Blue Badges. Each country also has a (printable) parking notice in that country's national language(s), explaining the Blue Badge/EU legislation regarding Blue Badges, which you can display on the dashboard next to your Blue Badge when you park.

We find this especially useful in countries which have yet to introduce the latest EU Blue Badge model (current UK Blue Badges are the latest model), and parking attendants/wardens are therefore sometimes unaware of the new design.

See: http://www.disabledmotorists.eu/en/world_map/europe/europe.htm

Bus Pass ('National Entitlement Card')

The bus pass entitles you to free travel throughout Scotland and as far south as Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed. There are various ways you can qualify for a free bus pass, including:

- You receive the higher rate of the mobility component or the higher or middle rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), or
- You receive Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or
- You have a 'progressive degenerative' condition such as Parkinson's, or
- You have a mental illness, or
- You have a learning disability, or
- You have a Blue Badge.

Also - if you receive either (a) the higher or middle rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or (b) the standard or enhanced rate of daily living component of Personal

Independence Payment (PIP), you can apply for a companion (“+1”) pass, which will entitle a companion/carer to travel with you for free.

See: <https://www.mygov.scot/disabled-bus-pass/> and

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-and-disabled#overview>

Care and Repair Scotland

Care and Repair Scotland help elderly and disabled people with necessary repairs or adaptations to their homes, so that they may continue to live independently.

From their website: “Care and Repair services offer personal, financial and technical support to people facing the difficult task of repairing, improving or adapting a home which is no longer suitable to the person's needs. The service is available to owner-occupiers, private tenants and crofters who are aged over 60 or who have a disability.

The provision of advice and information is a central part of Care and Repair's role, as well as providing practical assistance with grant applications and co-ordinating repairs. Care and Repair is a home-based and personalised service, which puts the client in control of decisions.”

See: <http://www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk/>

Cinema Card

If you are in receipt of DLA or PIP, you can apply for a CEA Card from the Cinema Exhibitors’ Association (CEA). This card entitles you to a free ticket for a companion/carer accompanying you to the cinema.

See: <https://www.ceacard.co.uk/index.aspx>

Council Tax: 25% Disability Discount

This is a little-known discount, which is intended for people with progressive degenerative neurological conditions such as Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s, which are classified as ‘severe mental impairment’ and the claimant is therefore ‘disregarded’ for council tax purposes.

Claims can be backdated (theoretically as far back as 1993), as well as from the date of the claim onwards. You will need to apply to your local council for this – and be prepared for them not knowing what you are speaking about.

This is not to be confused with the Council Tax discount which some disabled people may qualify for, if they have an extra/spare room dedicated to (eg) specific medical or toilet needs, or for a carer to stay over. (Council staff tend to be conversant with this discount, but not the Parkinson’s/Alzheimer’s one.) In this case, the Council Tax would be charged at a lower band rate than the ‘assigned’ band. You can apply for both discounts if you qualify.

Full details here: <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/reclaim/2016/09/lived-with-someone-with-alzheimers-parkinsons-or-a-similar-illness-you-may-be-able-to-reclaim-1000s-in-council-tax>

Dartford Bridge/Tunnel Toll Exemption

If your vehicle is registered with the DVLA as being exempt from road tax due to your disability (see **Road Tax Exemption** below), then you are automatically exempt from paying the Dartford Crossing tolls on the M25 around London. You don't need to do anything.

(NB: Motability vehicles are automatically registered with the DVLA as being road tax-exempt – you do not need to do anything.)

Details here: <https://www.gov.uk/dartford-crossing-fees-exemptions-penalties>

Dental Treatment

If you are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), you are then entitled to free dental treatment. Inform the receptionist at your dental surgery and you will be given an exemption form to fill in. You will also need to provide a copy of your ESA award letter from the DWP.

Being in receipt of DLA or PIP does **not** entitle you to free dental treatment.

Directory Enquiries – free

There is a free 195 Directory Enquiries number available for those for whom using a phonebook may be difficult, eg, if you have memory loss, Parkinson's or a physical disability.

You will need to complete a form and get it countersigned by your GP or another professional familiar with your disability. To get an application form, call 0800 587 0195, Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30 pm.

Disabled Parking Space

If you have mobility issues; possess a Blue Badge; do not have a private driveway or garage and have difficulty finding a parking space on the street near your home for your car, you can apply to your local council to have a disabled parking space created on the road near your home.

Note that such a parking space is not for your exclusive use however and can be used by any disabled person displaying a Blue Badge.

See: <https://www.mygov.scot/disabled-parking-space/>

Disabled Person's Railcard

You are eligible to apply for this Railcard if at least one of the following applies:

- You receive Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- You receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at either:
 - the higher or lower rate for the mobility component, or
 - the higher or middle rate for the care component
- You have a visual impairment
- You have a hearing impairment

- You have epilepsy
- You receive Attendance Allowance or Severe Disablement Allowance
- You receive War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement
- You receive War or Service Disablement Pension for 80% or more disability
- You buy or lease a vehicle through the Motability scheme

With the Railcard, you will receive 33% discount on most of your train ticket purchases **for both yourself and a companion**. The Railcard costs £20/year.

See: <http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/>

Driving Licence

Once you have been diagnosed with Parkinson's, although you do not have to give up driving, you are legally obliged to inform the DVLA of your condition. You will need to fill in a form and DVLA will then contact your GP and/or Parkinson's specialist.

Normally – assuming they give the go-ahead – you will then be issued with a new licence (free of charge) valid for three years. Just before this expires, the DVLA will contact you regarding renewal of your licence.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions>

and: <https://www.gov.uk/parkinsons-disease-and-driving>

Dry skin

One common side effect of many Parkinson's drugs seems to be extremely dry skin, especially on the hands and feet. From experience of having tried numerous skin creams in an attempt to address this problem, the most effective one is an American brand called O'Keeffe's. There are two versions: one for hands called 'Working Hands' and one for feet called 'Healthy Feet'.

Until recently, they were only available here online (via Amazon or eBay), but nowadays, larger branches of Boots and Superdrug stock them, as do some branches of B&Q, The Range and Homebase – look out for the 'Gorilla Glue' display stand (Gorilla Glue is made by the same company as O'Keeffe's).

It's not the cheapest (about £7.00~£8.50/tub), but a tub lasts forever (you only need a tiny amount) and you notice a huge improvement within 24 hours of the first application.

<http://www.boots.com/okeeffes-for-healthy-feet-foot-cream-91g-10227941>

<http://www.boots.com/okeeffes-working-hands-jar-96g-10224416>

Energy Companies' Priority Safety Register (PSR)

PSR is a scheme offered by energy suppliers to provide certain free services to OAPs, disabled and chronically ill people who may need extra help.

This includes priority reconnection after power cuts; alternative facilities for heating and cooking if the energy supply is interrupted; annual gas safety checks and arrangement to copy or send bills to someone else on your behalf.

For more information, call 0333 202 4760 (8.00am – 8.00pm Monday to Friday; 8.00am – 6.00pm Saturdays).

Evening Classes

Many councils throughout Scotland offer their evening classes free of charge to disabled people in receipt of DLA or PIP. Classes on offer range from foreign languages to creative writing, drama, computing, life skills and arts & crafts.

Search for ‘adult education’ on your local council’s website.

Ferries to mainland Europe

If you alert the ferry company when booking your trip that you have mobility issues, you will be accorded priority boarding and disembarkation as well as a parking space next to the lift in the ferry. If required, they will also arrange for a wheelchair to be made available for you.

<https://www.dfdseaways.co.uk/customer-service/passengers-with-reduced-mobility>

<http://www.poferries.com/en/dover-calais/travelling-with-us/accessibility>

<https://www.stenaline.co.uk/FAQs/customers-with-particular-needs/i-require-special-assistance-can-you-help>

Ferries to Orkney/Shetland

Disabled passengers are accorded a 10% concession on all ticket prices and accessible cabins are available on overnight sailings. Registered blind passengers travel for free (including use of a cabin).

Priority boarding is available for passengers in wheelchairs.

See: <http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk/on-board/accessibility-options/>

Ferries to the Hebrides/Western Isles

If you have a Blue Badge, Caledonian MacBrayne (“CalMac”) offer a 25% discount on the price of a vehicle ticket.

See: <https://www.calmac.co.uk/>

Flu jabs

People with Parkinson’s are classified as vulnerable to the ‘flu in winter and are therefore entitled to a free ‘flu jab in October/November each year. Check with your GP surgery for further information. (Note that your partner/carer also qualifies for a free ‘flu jab.)

Hotel Bathrooms

If you have mobility or balance issues, be sure to request a walk-in shower when booking hotel rooms, as many hotel bathrooms only have 'over bath' showers.

Larger/international hotel chains usually have disabled-accessible rooms available, which often have 'wet room'-style bathrooms.

Housing & Council Tax Benefit

If you live in rented accommodation (whether council-owned, housing association or privately-rented) and are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), you may be entitled to housing and/or council tax benefit.

Inform your local council that you are in receipt of ESA and you will be given the relevant forms to fill in. You will also need to provide proof of your income, savings and a copy of your ESA award letter from the DWP.

Check your local council's website for further information; most have a link to a 'benefits calculator', whereby you can see what (if any) benefits you are entitled to.

Libraries

Public libraries usually offer the following services either at a reduced rate or entirely free to disabled clients:

- Overdue books
- Computer access
- Audio and visual materials

The concessions for disabled people however differ from council area to council area. Check your local council's website for further information.

London Congestion Charge

If your car is registered with the DVLA as being road tax exempt due to your disability (see **Road Tax Exemption** below), then you are automatically exempt from paying the London Congestion Charge (which is currently £10/day), for driving in central London. You do not have to do anything. Note that Motability cars are automatically registered with the DVLA as being road tax exempt.

If your car is not road tax exempt but you are a Blue Badge holder, then you are also entitled to a 100% discount on the Congestion Charge. In order to secure this Blue Badge discount however, you must set up a 'London Road User Charging Account' (see: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/cc-blue-badge-before-you-begin-29758>), which will cost you a one-off fee of £10.

Details of the Blue Badge discount application process are here:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge/discounts-and-exemptions> (click 'Blue Badge Holders').

M6 Toll Mobility Exemption Pass

One of the worst parts of driving to the south of England from Scotland is navigating the inevitable notorious traffic jams on the M6 around Birmingham.

These can be avoided however by taking the M6 Toll motorway, which is usually devoid of traffic – and if you are in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or the enhanced rate of the mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Attendance Allowance (AA), you can apply for an M6 Toll Mobility Exemption Pass. The Pass is issued free of charge.

For your application, you will need to send the operators of the motorway a completed application form; a copy of your DLA/PIP/AA award letter from the DWP; a copy of your Blue Badge and a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

From experience, taking this route can save you anything between one and three hours compared to taking the non-toll M6.

See here for details: <https://www.m6toll.co.uk/pricing/exemptions/>

Motability Car

If you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or the Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you can trade in that component of your allowance for a brand-new Motability lease car.

The lease is for three years and includes an annual mileage allowance of 20,000 miles; road tax; fully comprehensive insurance; servicing; windscreen repair and replacement; tyre repair/replacement and UK+EU breakdown cover. You will also be provided with a 'courtesy car' when your car needs to go in for a service.

Many of the cars on the Motability scheme are available with zero Advance Payment (AP), although you can also choose to pay an AP of between £250 ~ £2,995 to get a car with a higher specification (e.g. satnav, leather seats, sunroof etc.). Certain adaptations to the car to accommodate your needs are also available free of charge.

At the end of the three years, you can then either simply hand the car back or choose a new one. You can choose a car from any manufacturer participating in the scheme.

See: <http://www.motability.co.uk/> for further information.

Parkinson's Emergency Contact Document

This handy document contains personal and emergency contact details, stating "I have Parkinson's disease. Please allow me time. In case of an emergency contact..." in any one of up to 25 languages.

Details here: <http://epda.eu.com/latest/resources/pd-doc/>

Parkinson's Passport

The Parkinson's Passport is an information booklet about your medications and treatment which you can carry with you when you are out and about or travelling abroad. Especially useful if/when you run out of medication(s) when you are away from home, as it saves you having to remember all the drug names and strengths/doses.

See: <http://epda.eu.com/latest/resources/parkinsons-passport/>

Prescription Medication

My local chemist does not hold stock of my Parkinson's meds (= Pramipexole, Cobeneldopa [Madopar] and Rasagilene), so they have to order them in every time I submit my repeat prescription each month. On at least three occasions however, I have gone along to pick up my meds a few days later, only to be told that the wholesaler has none of a particular drug in stock or that there are other supply issues. There then usually follows a mad panic, 'phoning around all the chemists in a 10-mile radius, desperately trying to locate stock of the drug in question.

I have since found a solution however, thanks to my ever-helpful GP: he wrote out an extra month's prescription for the drugs, so now I always have a 4-week buffer supply at home.

Secondly – be sure to check the details on meds boxes/containers. I recently picked up a month's supply of all my meds just prior to leaving on a 3-week holiday and decided to check the details on all the boxes (which is something I have never done before; I just assume [like most of us] that the pharmacist knows what he/she is doing). Shockingly, I discovered that instead of dispensing Pramipexole **2.62mg**, they had actually supplied me with Pramipexole **0.26mg** – a drug which is less than 10% of the strength of the one I need. Fortunately, when I went back to the chemist to explain the error, they actually had the right strength of the drug in stock (for once) and were able to immediately swap the boxes over.

Proof of Disability

Some of the 'deals' available to disabled people state that, in order to qualify, you need to be 'registered disabled', without making it clear what this exactly means (there is no such thing as a register of/for disabled people).

A copy of your award letter from the DWP showing that you are entitled to a disability benefit (eg DLA or PIP) is normally accepted as sufficient proof that you are disabled; alternatively, you can show your Blue Badge or your bus pass ('National Entitlement Card').

RADAR toilet key (now known as 'National Key Scheme')

The National Key Scheme (NKS) offers disabled people independent access to locked public accessible toilets around the country. You can obtain a key from your local council – take along your DLA or PIP award letter from the DWP – and note that while some councils do not charge for the key, others charge up to £3.50 per key.

Further information here: <http://www.disabilityscot.org.uk/info-guides/accessible-toilets/national-key-scheme/>

Road Tax Exemption

If you are disabled, you can apply to the DVLA for an exemption from paying road tax for your car. (Note: If you get a Motability car, it will automatically be registered with the DVLA as being road tax exempt.)

See: <https://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-tax-exemption-disability>

Scottish Cities' Congestion Charge

The Scottish Government has recently (September 2017) announced plans to introduce congestion charging schemes in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow by 2020, commencing with Glasgow in 2018.

This document will be updated accordingly as/when more information on these new schemes becomes available.

Taxi Card

If you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or the Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you can apply to your local council for a taxi card which will entitle you to a reduction on your taxi fares. Search your local council's website for details, or visit their offices or telephone them.

Theatre/concert tickets

Many theatres throughout the country offer discounted tickets to disabled people, while others offer companions or carers of disabled people free admission. Check with the individual theatre/venue when booking your tickets to find out what they offer. (In Stirling, the MacRobert Arts Centre at the University offers concessionary ticket prices to both a carer accompanying a disabled person and the disabled person themselves.)

Tourist attractions

You will find that many tourist attractions have discounted (or free) entrance tickets for disabled people and/or their carers/companions. In the Stirling area for example, both Stirling Castle and the Battle of Bannockburn Experience allow carers (accompanying disabled persons) free entry and the Blair Drummond Safari Park offers both disabled persons and their accompanying carers 50% discount on their regular ticket prices.

Check the organisation's website before you go for details of disabled discounts/concessions.

Voice to text messaging

Most smartphones and tablets (and some laptops) these days come with built-in voice-to-text capabilities – usually for email, WhatsApp, iMessage, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn and Twitter at the very least. Very useful when you're having a bad 'off' period and/or you have a tremor or dyskinesia in your hand(s).

Look out for the microphone icon button just to the left of the space bar on the virtual keyboard of your device: tap that once and your device is in voice-to-text mode. Although it's not always 100% accurate (especially if you have a Scottish accent (!)), if you enunciate clearly and don't speak too quickly, it usually captures your message fairly well. (Remember that you also have to 'say' punctuation marks out loud, eg: "full stop", "open brackets", "question mark" and "new line" etc.)

Zero % VAT

If you're disabled or have a long-term illness, you won't be charged VAT on products designed or adapted for your own personal or domestic use.

Usually products designed or adapted for a disability qualify, for example certain types of:

- adjustable beds
- stair lifts
- wheelchairs
- medical appliances to help with severe injuries
- alarms
- braille paper or low vision aids - but not spectacles or contact lenses
- motor vehicles - or the leasing of a Motability vehicle
- building work like ramps, widening doors, installing a lift or toilet

For full details, see: <https://www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vat-relief>

NOTE: ALL INFORMATION CORRECT AS OF NOVEMBER 2017