

## Driving and Huntington's Disease

Huntington's disease (HD) is an inherited disorder that causes brain cells to die in areas of the brain, including those that help to control voluntary movement such as lifting a cup or turning a key. HD worsens over time and will **cause uncontrolled movements, abnormal body postures, and changes in behavior, emotion, judgment, and cognition**. People with HD also develop impaired coordination, slurred speech, and difficulty feeding and swallowing. HD typically begins between ages 30 and 50. Reference: *National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. www.ninds.nih.gov*

A comprehensive driving evaluation completed by a driver rehabilitation specialist is recommended when a diagnosis or problems first arise. Areas assessed in the evaluation should include: attention, processing speed, visual spatial functioning, executive functioning, behavior, coordination, movement, and motor skills. Specific recommendations and compensatory strategies may be provided to allow for continued driving for a limited period. The goal is to maintain safe and independent driving for as long as possible, while realistically planning for eventual driver retirement. A baseline assessment should be followed by annual comprehensive driving evaluations. Reference: *Best Practice Guidelines for the Delivery of Driver Rehabilitation Services*

Huntington's disease symptoms that can affect driving:

- ▶ Motor changes
  - Decreased coordination, slow or delayed responses
  - Uncontrolled movement of body (chorea)
  - Decreased strength or spasms in extremities or posture (dystonia)



continued

To locate a driver rehabilitation specialist in your area or if you are interested in becoming a driver rehabilitation specialist, please contact:

ADED – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists  
 200 First Avenue NW, Suite 505 ✦ Hickory, NC 28601  
 (866) 672-9466 Toll Free in the US & Canada ✦ E-mail: [info@aded.net](mailto:info@aded.net) ✦ Web: [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net)

## Driving and Huntington's Disease

Huntington's disease symptoms that can affect driving (continued):

- ▶ Cognitive changes
  - Difficulty with attention/divided attention
  - Decreased memory (short term or immediate memory)
  - Poor judgement of time and space
  - Slowed notice and response to hazards and safety information
  
- ▶ Behavior/emotional changes
  - Decreased coordination, slow or delayed responses
  - Uncontrolled movement of body (chorea)
  - Decreased strength or spasms in extremities or posture (dystonia)

▶ Warning signs to look for:

- Resting feet on pedals
- Two foot driving due to difficulty moving the right leg between the gas & brake
- Pumping gas and brake pedals vs smooth depression
- Quick, abrupt steering adjustments, over-correction in steering maneuvers
- Difficulty staying in their own driving lane
- Poor concentration, alertness, attention while driving
- Poor estimation of available space
- Slow to identify and avoid potentially hazardous situations
- Patterns of getting lost or confused, even in familiar areas
- Easily frustrated, unusually quick to escalate, mood swings
- Dismissive of signs, signals, rules and regulations

If you or someone you know is having any of the above warning signs, a driver evaluation with a qualified driver rehabilitation specialist may be indicated. A driver rehabilitation specialist with knowledge about medical conditions can provide a comprehensive evaluation to determine one's ability to drive and help to support mobility planning.

To learn more and to find a driver rehabilitation specialist in your area, visit [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net).

To locate a driver rehabilitation specialist in your area contact:

ADED – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists  
 200 First Avenue NW, Suite 505 ▪ Hickory, NC 28601  
 (866) 672-9466 Toll Free in the US & Canada ▪ E-mail: [info@aded.net](mailto:info@aded.net) ▪ Web: [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net)