

12B

# Choosing the right vehicle

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## Information for people with or affected by motor neurone disease

With motor neurone disease (MND), careful consideration is essential when choosing a vehicle, as your needs will be more complex whether you are a driver or a passenger.

This information sheet will help you think about your needs and what to look for in an adapted vehicle, in the following sections:

- 1: **What options do I have?**
- 2: **What should I consider when choosing a vehicle?**
- 3: **How can the Motability scheme help me?**
- 4: **How do I find out more?**

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 This symbol is used to highlight **our other publications**. To find out how to access these, see *Further information* at the end of this sheet.

 This symbol is used to highlight **quotes** from other people with or affected by MND.



The MND Association has been certified as a producer of reliable health and social care information.  
[www.england.nhs.uk/tis](http://www.england.nhs.uk/tis)

## 1: What options do I have?

If you are considering getting a new vehicle with MND, expert advice can help you continue driving in safety and comfort for as long as possible.


When choosing a vehicle, consider how your needs may change in the future, as mistakes can be very costly. An independent driving assessment at a mobility centre can help you select the best vehicle to meet your needs.

Both Rica and Motability produce fact sheets about adapted vehicles which you may find helpful. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

### Am I allowed to drive with MND?

You must inform the driving licence authority that you have been diagnosed with MND. This is the DVLA in England and Wales, or DVA if you live in Northern Ireland. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

They may require you to undertake a driving assessment to decide if you can legally continue to drive and whether you need an adapted vehicle. In this case, they will pay for the assessment and any future reviews. You may need to pay for a later visit if you cancel an appointment.

 For more about driving with MND, see:  
Information Sheet 12A – *Driving*

See later heading *How can a driving assessment help me?* for more information about driving assessments.

### Can I adapt my own vehicle?

As a driver or a passenger, adaptations can make it easier for you to access a vehicle and improve comfort. Mobility centres can assess your requirements and advise on the right assistance for you.

Adaptations can help you to:

- manage the driving controls
- stow your wheelchair or mobility scooter
- get in and out of the car more easily.

It is worth being aware that some adaptations can be very costly, and may only be suitable for a short amount of time, as with MND your needs will change.

There are a range of options if you choose to adapt your existing vehicle. In most cases the original car controls can still be used by other drivers.

Adaptations that can be made to your existing vehicle include:

- wheelchair hoists
- steering wheel aids
- alternative hand controls
- alternative foot controls, such as left foot accelerators
- pedal guards (to protect pedals when hand controls are used)
- easy release handbrake devices
- swivel seats
- infra-red or wireless controls.

Some powered adaptations can drain your vehicle's battery, and you may need to use an external charger between journeys. Ask about this when considering your options.

Rica has unbiased guidance on car controls, hoists and other adaptations, as well as a list of all the adaptation companies in the UK. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

If you use a wheelchair, you will not have to pay VAT for any adaptations to your vehicle.

## **What is a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV)?**

A wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) enables you to travel, either as a passenger or as a driver, without transferring out of your wheelchair. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes and designs. They have a built-in ramp or a lift to access them.

Various seating layouts are possible, depending on the vehicle and your requirements. Some WAVs enable you to sit in your wheelchair beside the driver, in others you will be seated in the back of the vehicle.

Some WAVs enable you to drive while still seated in your wheelchair. These are known as 'drive-from WAVs'. These vehicles are tailored to meet your individual needs and can include complex adaptations. This makes the timescales and costs much higher than for a standard WAV.

There are a number of companies that hire WAVs. These can be found on the Rica website which also has in-depth guidance on choosing a WAV, based on the views of WAV users. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?*

## How can a driving assessment help me?

Occupational therapists (OTs) and driving instructors at the mobility centre can offer advice on the most suitable vehicle or adaptations for you, as either a driver or a passenger. They should take into account how your needs are likely to change with MND and should have a selection of vehicles for you to test drive.

Driving assessments usually take place at mobility centres based throughout the UK. If you find it difficult to travel to a centre, they may be able to assess you at home, with a vehicle for you to test. Ask if this service is available when you contact them.

Mobility centres can be contacted directly to arrange an assessment. You may need to pay for this if you have not been referred by the DVLA or DVA. Drive Mobility (formerly known as The Forum of Mobility Centres) can help you find your nearest assessment centre. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

## Can I buy a used adapted vehicle?

Yes, many used vehicles already have adaptations in place. These are available from most Motability dealerships, and a variety of publications also advertise these vehicles. However, it is still worth having an independent driving assessment. Although you can find good used vehicles at a reduced price, buying an unsuitable vehicle can be an expensive mistake.

## 2: What should I consider when choosing a vehicle?

Armed with the information gained from your assessment, it is worth trying out several vehicles before you make a final decision.

Although the car dealer will be knowledgeable about their vehicles, they will not be an expert in MND or your future needs. It may help to discuss how your travel requirements could change in the future with your health and social care team, or an occupational therapist experienced in MND.

Consider the following:

- Will the vehicle be suitable for your future needs?
- Do you want to travel in your wheelchair or transfer from the wheelchair to a car seat?
- Will you be travelling on your own or do you want to carry passengers?
- What adaptations will you need?
- If you are a driver, do you want to enter through the rear of the vehicle or the driver's door?

- If you are a passenger, do you want to be in the rear or front of the vehicle?
- If your wheelchair is heavy, will a lift system be needed?
- Is it easy to secure the wheelchair in the vehicle?
- Is visibility from your wheelchair good enough when seated in the car?

Rica, with Motability, has an online car measurement search with over 1,300 car factsheets. You can short-list vehicles to suit your needs. For example, you can select vehicles which are easier to get in and out of, or vehicles with enough space to carry a wheelchair in the boot. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

You can visit the Mobility Roadshow or the Motability One Big Day where you will be able to sit in different types of vehicles to see which would suit. Search online to find events in your area.

### 3: How can the Motability scheme help me?

The Motability scheme can help you to lease a vehicle, adapted vehicle or WAV. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for Motability contact details.



*“The Motability car has given Dad a new lease of life and so much freedom, so the benefits really do outweigh the costs.”*

Motability recommend visiting at least two dealerships before making any decisions. Motability dealers should:

- help you to complete a questionnaire about your requirements
- support you to identify suitable vehicles
- answer any questions you may have
- arrange a number of test drives for you.

### Am I eligible for the Motability scheme?

You may be eligible for the Motability scheme if:

- you receive the higher rate mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- your PIP or DLA award has 12 months or more remaining.

Other disability-related benefits, such as Attendance Allowance, cannot be used to lease a car through the scheme.



For more information about PIP and DLA, see:  
Information sheet 10A - *Benefits and entitlements*

You do not have to be the driver to benefit from the scheme. You can nominate up to two other drivers living within five miles of your home, and you can pay extra for a third.

## **How does the scheme work?**

To take part, you exchange part or all of your mobility allowance for the car of your choice. For more expensive models, you may need to pay some money up front.

The agreement with Motability is usually for three years, or five years for a WAV. If the PIP or DLA award runs out during the contract period and is not renewed, the car will have to be returned.

If you already have a Motability car, but lose your award for the mobility component of DLA after being reassessed for PIP, you may be able to keep the car for seven weeks after DLA is stopped. You may also be eligible for a payment from Motability towards the purchase of a replacement car.

## **Can I get vehicle adaptations through Motability?**

Only Motability approved installers should make adaptations to your vehicle. Many adaptations can be fitted at the start of your lease at no extra cost, but for some there is an additional charge.

If you need adaptations to be made during the lease period, you may have to pay for this yourself unless you are a wheelchair user.

If adaptations are not a suitable solution, you may wish to consider a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV). These are also available on the scheme. WAV's require an agreement for five years, and you may need to make an advance payment. A grant may be available through Motability to help cover this cost.

## **How does leasing a car through Motability work?**

A detailed assessment before leasing a car can help to ensure the vehicle will be suitable for the length of the contract. After the contract has expired, the leased car will be returned to Motability.

There are many models and makes of cars to choose from. For smaller models, you may not need to use your whole allowance, and will continue to receive the remaining amount. For larger vehicles or WAVs, your allowance may not be enough to cover the full cost. In these circumstances, you may need to make an advance payment.

If you cannot afford the advance payment, Motability may be able to help you through a grant, subject to a means test. Financial help is only given towards the least expensive solution to meet your needs and you will be expected to make a contribution.

The lease contract includes the following:

- a new car every three years (or five years for a WAV)
- insurance and personal accident cover
- servicing, maintenance and repairs (wear and tear repairs)
- full breakdown assistance
- road tax
- free replacement tyres
- window and windscreen replacement
- 60,000 mileage allowance over three years (or 100,000 for a WAV over five years)
- some adaptations at no extra cost.

In the event of breakdown, accident or repair, Motability will provide a courtesy car. For the first five days this may not be an adapted car or WAV. If your vehicle will be off the road for more than five days, Motability will try to provide a more suitable vehicle.

If the vehicle no longer meets your needs during the contract period, Motability may agree to cancel your contract. There is usually a fee. If you made an advance payment, part of that amount would be refunded.

You can then enter into a new contract for a more suitable vehicle, but Motability would need to be assured that the new vehicle would meet your needs for the length of the new contract.

## **Can I get a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair through Motability?**

The Motability scheme can help if you would prefer a powered wheelchair or mobility scooter. It is always best to have an independent assessment to ensure the vehicle will be suitable for you now and in the future.

You can get a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair through a lease contract, where a single monthly payment is taken from the PIP/DLA higher mobility allowance, and includes breakdown cover, insurance, maintenance. No advance payment is needed for this.

## **Do I need to register my mobility scooter or wheelchair?**

There are different rules about registering with the DVLA, or DVA if you live in Northern Ireland, depending on the type of mobility scooter or wheelchair:

**Class 1:** Manual wheelchairs (self-propelled or attendant propelled), do not need to be registered.

**Class 2:** Powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters, intended for footway use only, with a maximum speed of 4mph and weigh less than 113.4kgs, do not need to be registered.

**Class 3:** Powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters with a maximum speed limit of 8 mph on roads/highways and 4 mph on footways do need to be registered. The wheelchair or mobility scooter must weigh less 150kgs. You are legally required to register Class 3 powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters with the DVLA, or DVA if you live in Northern Ireland.

You do not have to pay vehicle tax on class 3 powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters, but they do need to be registered with the DVLA, or DVA if you live in Northern Ireland. Class 3 powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters are also exempt from paying the first registration fee and are not required to display registration plates.

Unlike ordinary cars, these mobility scooters and wheelchairs are exempt from road tax when licensed in the disabled taxation class. They are also exempt from paying the first registration fee and are not required to display registration plates.

If you are unsure if your mobility scooter or powered wheelchair has to be registered contact DVLA, or DVA if you live in Northern Ireland. See *Useful organisations* in section 4: *How do I find out more?*

## **Do I need insurance for my mobility scooter or wheelchair?**

Although not a legal requirement, it is worth insuring your mobility scooter or electric wheelchair, particularly if you intend to use them outside of your home. Check your household insurance, as you may already have cover for parking and storage at home, but not necessarily for use outside or on the roads.

Insurance covers your personal safety, third party safety and the value of your mobility scooter or electric wheelchair in the case of theft or damage. Depending on the level of your cover, it may also include breakdown and replacement.

If you would like more information about insuring your vehicle, contact our MND Connect helpline. See *Further information* in section 4: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.



## 4: How do I find out more?

### Useful organisations

We do not necessarily endorse the external organisations listed here. These have been provided to help you search for further information if necessary. Details are correct at the time of print, but may change between revisions. If you need help to find an organisation, contact our MND Connect helpline (see *Further information* at the end of this sheet for details about our helpline and how they can support you).

#### Disabled Motoring UK

A charity which provides a mobility information service to the general public.

Address: National Headquarters, Ashwellthorpe, Norwich, NR16 1EX

Telephone: 01508 489449

Email: [info@disabledmotoring.org](mailto:info@disabledmotoring.org)

Website: [www.disabledmotoring.org](http://www.disabledmotoring.org)

#### DVA (Northern Ireland)

Find out if your health condition will affect your driving and if you will be able to keep your driving license. Contact details for Northern Ireland.

Address: Drivers Medical Section, Castlerock Road, Waterside, Coleraine, BT51 3TB

Email: [dva@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:dva@doeni.gov.uk)

Website: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/motoring](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/motoring)

#### DVLA

Find out if your health condition will affect your driving and if you will be able to keep your driving license. Contact details for England and Wales.

Address: Drivers Medical Group, DVLA, Swansea SA99 1DL

Telephone: 0300 790 6806 (if you are a car or motorcycle licence holder)

Telephone: 0300 790 6807 (if you hold a bus or lorry licence)

Email: [eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk)

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

#### Drive Mobility (formerly Forum of Mobility Centres)

Details on driving assessments and locations of regional mobility centres, (commonly referred to as Driver Assessment Centres).

Address: c/o Unit 11, Network Park, Duddeston Mill Road, Birmingham B8 1AU

Telephone: 0800 559 3636

Email: [info@drivingmobility.org.uk](mailto:info@drivingmobility.org.uk)

Website: [www.drivingmobility.org.uk](http://www.drivingmobility.org.uk)

#### Motability

Details about vehicle leasing or hire purchase through the Motability scheme.

Address: City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HB

Telephone: 0300 456 4566

Email: through the website contact page  
Website: [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)

### **MyHailo**

A key fob that you can buy, which can be pressed to call for help refuelling your car at selected petrol stations in the UK.

Address: Contacta, Office 13, Dana Trading Estate,  
Transfesa Road, Tonbridge TN12 6UT  
Telephone: 01732 223 900  
Email: through the website contact page  
Website: [www.myhailo.co.uk](http://www.myhailo.co.uk)

### **Rica**

Unbiased guidance for disabled people on choosing a car, car adaptations, an online car search, and information on mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs.

Address: Unit G03, The Wenlock, 50-52 Wharf Road, London N1 7EU  
Telephone: 020 7427 2460  
E-mail: [mail@rica.org.uk](mailto:mail@rica.org.uk)  
Website: [www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk)

## **References**

References used to support this document are available on request from:

Email: [infofeedback@mndassociation.org](mailto:infofeedback@mndassociation.org)

Or write to: Information feedback, MND Association, PO Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR

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## **Further information**

We provide other sheets related to this information:

10A - *Benefits and entitlements*

12A - *Driving*

12C - *Travel and transport*

We also produce the following guides:

*Living with MND* – our main guide to MND and how to manage its impact

*Caring and MND: support for you* – comprehensive information for unpaid and family carers

You can download most of our publications from our website at: [www.mndassociation.org/publications](http://www.mndassociation.org/publications) or order in print from the MND Connect helpline. The helpline team can also answer questions about this information, and direct you to our services and to other support:

 **MND Connect**  
Telephone: 0808 802 6262  
Email: [mndconnect@mndassociation.org](mailto:mndconnect@mndassociation.org)  
MND Association, PO Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR

### **MND Association website and online forum**

Website: [www.mndassociation.org](http://www.mndassociation.org)

Online forum: <http://forum.mndassociation.org> or through the website

## **We welcome your views**

Your feedback is really important to us, as it helps improve our information for the benefit of people living with MND and those who care for them. If you would like to provide feedback on any of our information sheets, you can access an online form at: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/infosheets\\_1-25](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/infosheets_1-25)

You can request a paper version of the form or provide feedback by email at: [infofeedback@mndassociation.org](mailto:infofeedback@mndassociation.org)

Or write to: Information feedback, MND Association, PO Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR

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