

rica



Motoring with restricted growth

2016

Motoring with restricted growth

Contents

Driving with restricted growth	3
Plan of action	4
Choosing a car	5
Products and techniques	6
Finance	9
Further information	10

This booklet is for people with restricted growth and outlines some of the key things to consider when choosing or adapting a car. Information in this booklet comes from consultation with people with restricted growth and other experts. Price information comes from our market research – use as a guide only and shop around for the best price.

In this booklet we give information on:

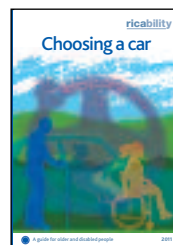
- how your condition may affect your driving and the rules about driving with a disability.
- useful features on standard cars and specialist products and techniques.
- sources of funding and expert advice, including addresses.

More detailed information on choosing and using a car can be found in the Rica guides shown here. All our guides are free – contact us for a copy or see them on our website:

020 7427 2460

www.rica.org.uk

The website also has the **Find a car** database of car measurements that will help you find a car to suit you.



Choosing a car

Features that may help you and ways of adapting a car



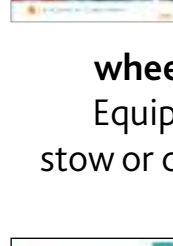
Family cars

Cars and equipment for families of disabled children



Car controls

Adaptations and how to get them



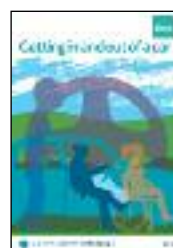
Getting a wheelchair into a car

Equipment to help you stow or carry a wheelchair



Getting in and out of a car

Techniques and equipment that may help



Wheelchair accessible vehicles

Converted vehicles to carry you in your wheelchair



Mobility address list

All the adaptation suppliers and car converters in the UK and the services they offer





Driving with restricted growth

People of small stature drive all makes, models and sizes of car. You must be able to reach all the driving controls – pedals, parking brake, gear selector and steering wheel – and have all round vision. Make sure you can see over the dashboard and check bulky door mirrors do not block your front view or the headrest your rear view.

A standard car may be OK for you or you may need adaptations to suit your size and shape, including pedal extensions and seat modifications.

You have to tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) if your condition affects your ability to drive a standard car. For more information, go to www.gov.uk/dvla or get *What you need to know about driving licences (D100)* from a post office. You must also tell your insurance company about your condition and any car adaptations you have.

AIRBAGS

Research has shown that shorter and lighter motorists – under 160 cm (63 in)

and 55 kg (121 lb) – are more likely to be hurt by airbags. If you sit closer than 32 cm (just under 13 in) from the steering wheel, you are likely to be in the 'airbag deployment zone' and you could risk injury.

Sit as far away from the steering wheel as you comfortably can and make sure your seat belt is close fitting and in good condition. If you can adjust the steering wheel, tilt it downwards slightly to face your chest rather than your head to reduce the risk of injury. Reclining the seat might also help. Fortunately many new cars have 'smart' (also called 'multi-stage') airbags which inflate fully only if sensors detect suitable seat and driver positions. Discuss this with your dealer.

You could also be injured if you have your arm across the wheel – as you will at times with a steering ball or spinner (see page 6) – when the airbag fires.

If your height, driving position or any adaptations make you unsafe with an airbag, the adaptation company or the main dealer may be able to deactivate or remove it.

There is more information at www.rosipa.com and www.dft.gov.uk. Search for 'airbags' on both sites.

SEAT BELTS

Some people find seat belts difficult to use or uncomfortable. They can be modified, but never have a seat belt modified by an unqualified person. Your adaptation company should be able to ensure any modification is safe and legal.

Don't use cushions to lift yourself up in the seat unless they are designed to be used this way. They will stop the seat belt from working properly in a crash. Any product for adapting seat belts must come with safety and legal information and full and clear instructions. Some may be suitable only for specific vehicles.

Belts need to cross your shoulder and fit low across the pelvis, avoiding the softer abdomen.

You must notify your insurance company of any adaptations you are using.

Plan of action

1 Ask some basic questions

Think about what you may need in the future as well as about what suits you now. Prepare to compromise as you may not find everything in one car.

How will you get in and out?

Will you be comfortable in the seat?

Will you need specialist controls?

What equipment will you carry?

Find a car

- Use our online search tool of car measurements to find cars that suit you.
- Go to www.rica.org.uk and follow the link for the Car measurement database.

2 Collect information

Start with motoring magazines, the internet and manufacturers' brochures as well as the monthly magazine published by Disabled Motoring UK (see page 10). www.youreable.com has an online discussion forum covering topics including benefits and motoring.

3 Try out before buying

Try any car you are considering. Try getting in and out several times. If you already use any adaptations, ask if you can try the car with them fitted.

Tip

- To try out a range of different cars all in the same place, visit a secondhand car supermarket.

If you need more specialist help, you can try out adapted cars at adaptation companies. They will also tell you if the adaptations can be fitted to your chosen car. You could also visit one of these:

Mobility Centres (see page 10) for a driving assessment and to find out what equipment may suit you.

Mobility Roadshow and **Motability One Big Day** (see page 11) to see and try out vehicles and adaptations.

4 Get plenty of practice

Make sure that you are not driving with adaptations for the first time when you collect the car. Ask the adapter if they have a demonstration model.

Mobility Centres can help you find specialist instructors locally who can give you lessons in an adapted car.

Choosing a car

If you are buying a new car, the following pointers should help you identify useful features on standard production vehicles. Many people with restricted growth can drive a standard car with nothing more specialised than a cushion for their back. The less a car is modified, the higher its resale value. Many helpful features like adjustable power steering are now available on a wider range of models, so you should have a good choice.

When deciding on the type of car, think about your needs and how they might change in the future. Use the list below to tick the features you might find useful:

GETTING IN AND OUT

- no sills or low, narrow sills
- conveniently placed handholds
- seat height that suits you
- a seat pad that does not slope up at the front (lifting your legs away from the floor and from the pedals if you are the driver)
- a short distance to reach back for the seatbelt from the driver's seat.

LOCKING AND IGNITION

- remote and central locking
- keyless entry system
- push button start
- windows that close automatically when the car is locked.

PRIMARY CONTROLS

For steering, braking and accelerating:

- automatic transmission – a must for many drivers with restricted growth

- adjustable steering wheel, so you can get it close to you
- power assisted steering – on some cars this can be lightened by the dealership or by specialist converters
- pedals – make sure you can push them all the way in
- cruise control to maintain a constant speed
- handbrakes can be stiff if you have a weak hand and wrist – check that you can put it on and off
- some cars have electronic, push button handbrakes and you can have one fitted to many others.

SECONDARY CONTROLS

For things like the horn, lights and indicators – try to find a model where these are in the best position for you:

- electric windows
- electric and heated door mirrors
- heated windscreen
- wipers which switch on automatically when it rains
- lights which switch on automatically when it gets dark
- easy controls for audio equipment, air conditioning, etc – some cars have voice activated controls
- parking sensors or reversing camera
- park assist – steers the car into the parking space for parallel parking.

BOOT

- no sill or low sill
- internal boot release
- boot which opens by power
- space for your wheelchair if you have one, or any mobility equipment you use.

Products and techniques

We give brief details below of the products and techniques that might suit you.

If your family or friends also drive your car, make sure any adaptations do not get in their way or make driving difficult for them, or fit removable ones.

GETTING IN AND OUT

If you need support getting in and out, check what you can hold on to because hand holds above the car door might be beyond your reach.

If you can't reach to close the door from the seat, partly close it as you get in or use a stick to hook it towards you.

If reaching the boot to close it is a problem, you can fit an electronic boot closer or try fixing a strap to it.

Tips

Here is advice from drivers with restricted growth:

- Learn to drive as young as you can.
- Ask the dealer if you can use removable extended pedals on a test drive.
- Use a lumbar support cushion on the seat to bring you nearer to the controls.
- If you have an average sized torso and short limbs, adjust your seat down for comfort.
- Get advice from an independent Mobility Centre.
- Go for a big car – it does the ego a world of good.

Wheelchair users – If you need help stowing a wheelchair, there is a range of devices and techniques for getting you and the wheelchair into your car. See our guide *Getting a wheelchair into a car* for more information.

SEATING

The right seat height is important, and you may need the flexibility of an adjustable seat. You can make your existing seat higher or height adjustable, add a swivelling mechanism or have a specialist replacement seat fitted (from £800 from adaptation firms).

If it helps to swivel, turning cushions are available from general aids suppliers (mostly £20–£80) and replacement swivel seats (£850 upwards) can be fitted by adaptation companies. See our guide *Getting in and out of a car* for more information and *Mobility address list* for details of adaptation companies.

PRIMARY CONTROLS

Steering – If you have to steer one-handed, for example if you have hand controls, you can fit a steering ball or spinner to the steering wheel.

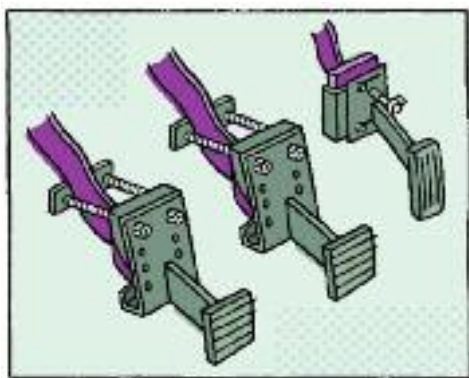
Spinners come in several shapes and sizes to suit different types of grip (£15 – £110).



Steering wheel grips from Alfred Bekker

There are specialist and custom built steering solutions. These are complicated and expensive, so you need to get an assessment at a Mobility Centre. See our guide *Car controls* for more information.

Pedals – The size, position and shape of pedals can sometimes be altered to suit your needs. Clutch, accelerator and brake pedals can be extended to bring them nearer. Make sure you can push the pedals all the way in and let them all the way out.



Pedal Pal bolt-on pedal extensions from £69 a pedal – they fit most cars and adjustable and quick release versions are available



Menox Stamp extension kit raises all three pedals – from £680 fitted from Autoadapt

Changing gears – Automatic transmission means fewer gear changes and helps with pulling away, especially in hill starts.

Usually automatics have a mechanical gear selector. If this is too hard for you to use, you can have an electronic system fitted, but these can be expensive. Take advice from a Mobility Centre before investing in one of these systems.



Electronic gear selector, from Adaptacar

Some cars have automated manual gear systems which work without using a clutch pedal. You move a lever or use push buttons or paddles on the steering wheel to select a gear.



Gear controls on steering wheel

Adaptation companies can also extend the gear selector of a manual or automatic car to bring it within reach.

If you can reach the gear stick, but not the clutch pedal, you can fit a lever or button on the gear stick of a manual car that allows you to operate the clutch with the same hand as you use to change gear. This may make it possible for you to drive a manual car (from £2,145).

Accelerating and braking – If you cannot use pedals, you can fit hand controls. You need to have automatic transmission.

- Push pull controls combine acceleration and braking in one lever – mounted on the steering column or on the floor (£400-£900).



Jeff Gosling single lever accelerator and brake – here fitted with optional indicator switch

- Separate controls for the accelerator and brake give you more choice and may need less effort. An under ring accelerator (from £1,800) lets you steer with both hands. This is normally combined with a hand-operated brake lever (from £360).



Under ring accelerator

Parking brake – Mechanical attachments can make it easier to use the handbrake (from £70). Electronic parking brakes cost from around £700.

To help with pulling away, especially

in hill starts, manual cars can be fitted with RSE Auto-brake – ask your adaptation advisor.

SECONDARY CONTROLS

If you have difficulty using controls for the lights and indicators, there are simple and complex solutions.

If you need to work the indicator with your right hand, for example, you can fit an extension to the indicator stalk that takes it over the steering column.

If you have more complex needs, electronic systems can be fitted that bring all the secondary controls together in one unit. Prices vary widely depending on how complex they are and on the wiring system of the car (from £600).



Steering knob combined with wireless secondary controls

Check the cost of any adaptation you are considering and its compatibility with your car with an adaptation specialist before ordering your car.

OTHER WAYS OF DRIVING

Nearly all controls can be altered or adapted to suit you and complete systems built around you if necessary. Obviously the more equipment and adjustment you need, the higher the cost. You will certainly need an assessment at a Mobility Centre and specialist instruction for systems that involve driving in a very different way.

RICA GUIDES

Our other guides give more detailed information about specialist equipment:

Getting in and out of a car

- hoists which lift and lower you on to a car seat
- lifting seats which swing in and out of the car, lowering and locking into a position to suit you.

Getting a wheelchair into a car

- hoists, lifts and ramps to help get a wheelchair or scooter into the boot
- boot and rooftop hoists which stow a wheelchair once you are in your seat
- trailers and racks which carry a wheelchair on the back of the car.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles

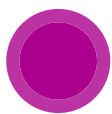
- adapted cars that let you travel in your wheelchair.

Car controls

- primary and secondary control adaptations.

Family cars

- seating for safety and support.



Finance

Motability – Contract Hire scheme set up for disabled people, using the Higher/Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of DLA, PIP or AFIP or the War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement. See page 11 for more information.

Access to Work – May help if you are working or about to start work. Phone 0345 268 8499, ask at your Jobcentre or go to www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople.

VAT exemption on adaptations – You do not have to pay VAT on adaptations, or on installation, repairs or maintenance.

VAT exemption on a new car – If you use a wheelchair or stretcher, you may not have to pay VAT on the purchase and maintenance of an adapted car.

Information from HM Revenue and Customs (see page 11).

Vehicle Excise Duty (Road Tax) – You don't have to pay this if you get the Higher/Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of DLA, PIP or AFIP. Claim disability exemption when you apply for vehicle tax. See www.gov.uk/vehicle-exempt-from-vehicle-tax.

Car insurance – Under the Equality Act 2010, insurers are not allowed to refuse disabled drivers insurance or charge extra without justifying evidence. Shop around for the best deal.

Mobility Centres and disabled motorists' organisations (see pages 10-11) have lists of companies that specialise in disabled drivers.

Charities – To find one that may help try:

- Charity Search – provides a free service for people over 50, to help find a grant-giving charity
Tel: 0117 982 4060 (9am-2.30pm)
www.charitysearch.org.uk
- Turn2Us – a website for people in financial need: www.turn2us.org.uk
- contacting local support groups (see pages 10-11)
- your library for local charities such as the Round Table or the Rotary or Lions Clubs.

Blue Badge Scheme

Allows disabled people to park in restricted areas. The rules are different in different places so do read and follow the conditions of use carefully. The scheme is administered by local authorities who deal with applications and issue badges.

**Contact your local authority for more information or phone:
0844 463 0213 (England)
0844 463 0214 (Scotland)
0844 463 0215 (Wales)**

**blue.badge@northgate-is.com
www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge**

Demand

- national charity that designs and makes specialist equipment for disabled people
- carries out maintenance and repairs on specialist equipment
- online shop selling new and second hand specialist sporting and mobility equipment.

Tel: 01923 681 800

Email: info@demand.org.uk
demandequipment.com

Disability Benefits Helpline

- government information service.

Tel: 03457 123456 (DLA)

03458 503322 (PIP)

www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline

Disabled Living Foundation

- advice and information on equipment and services for disabled people
- training for professionals.

Tel: 0300 999 0004 (10am-4pm)

www.dlf.org.uk

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Disabled Motoring UK

- the campaigning charity for disabled motorists. They run the Baywatch campaign against parking abuse and represent disabled people's needs at a national level. Membership £24 per year – includes monthly magazine.

The Street

Ashwellthorpe NR16 1EX

Tel: 01508 489449

Fax: 01508 488173

Email: info@disabledmotoring.org

www.mobilise.info

DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency)

Drivers Medical Group

Tel: 0300 790 6806

Fax: 0845 850 0095

Email: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions

Northern Ireland: Driver & Vehicle Agency

Driver Licensing Medical Section

Tel: 0845 402 4000

Email: dva@doeni.gov.uk

www.dvani.gov.uk

Forum of Mobility Centres

- a network of independent, accredited Mobility Centres which will: assess your driving and give you advice about how to make it safer, easier and more comfortable; give advice to carers; in some cases, help you find a specialist driving instructor.
- national information service on driving, specialist equipment and vehicle adaptations

Freephone: 0800 559 3636

www.mobility-centres.org.uk

HM Revenue and Customs

- VAT relief on adaptations (VAT Notice 701/7) and motor vehicles (VAT Notice 701/59) for disabled people.

Tel: 0300 123 1073

www.gov.uk/dvla

The Mobility Roadshow

- free events with advice, demonstrations and test drives on cars and mobility products and services.

Mobility Choice in England, Scotland and Wales:

Email: info@motabilityroadshow.co.uk

www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

Motability

- Use Higher/Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of DLA, PIP or AFIP or your War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement to lease a car.
- Maintenance and servicing, insurance and breakdown assistance are included. Motability contribute towards the cost of adaptations.
- You may have to make an advance payment to cover the cost of the car.

- Motability have useful information, including videos on choosing a car and driving adaptations on their website.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

Textphone: 0300 037 0100

www.motability.co.uk

One Big Day/Big Event

- Motability run these regional events for customers and people interested in the scheme – you can see and test drive cars and adaptations.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

www.motabilityevents.co.uk

Remap

- voluntary group of engineers who design and manufacture devices when there is nothing else on the market.

In England and Wales

Tel: 01732 760209

Email: data@remap.org.uk

www.remap.org.uk

In Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9086 4251

Email: victor.cole@remapni.org

www.remapni.org

In Scotland

Tel: 01466 730736

Email: remap-scotland@btconnect.com

www.remap-scotland.org

Restricted Growth Association

- Support, information and advice for individuals who have a restricted growth condition and their families.

Helpline: 0300 111 1970

Email: office@restrictedgrowth.co.uk

restrictedgrowth.co.uk



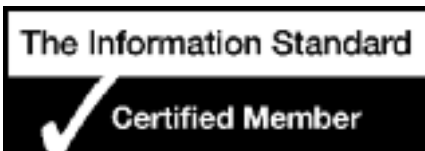
Consumer research for older and disabled people.

Rica is an independent charity that publishes information on products and services for older and disabled people.

Tel: 020 7427 2460
Email: mail@rica.org.uk
www.rica.org.uk



The information in this guide is correct at the time of going to print (April 2016). It is reviewed every two years. See our website for any changes since printing.



ISBN: 978-1-907408-34-2
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forum of mobility centres

