

Your Health and Driving

Information Sheet

As people age, the onset of different medical conditions is not uncommon. These conditions, and the medications used to treat them, can affect critical driving skills and your ability to drive safely. As a driver, you have a legal responsibility to your passengers, other road users and yourself to ensure you are fit to drive. This fact sheet aims to provide information on health related issues that can impact on driving ability.

Please note that if you decide to surrender your driver licence voluntarily or have it cancelled for medical reasons you may be eligible to receive an Adult Proof of Age card free of charge to give you an alternative form of photo identity. For more information enquire at a Department of Transport and Main Roads customer service centre or Queensland Government licence issuing centre, or call 13 23 80*.

Medical conditions

If you don't go to the doctor very often, you may not realise you have a condition that impacts on your driving. Medical conditions can be physical (e.g. affect strength and flexibility) or neurological (e.g. affect sensory and/or thinking abilities). Some medical conditions that may impact on your driving include:

- Dementia
- Multiple sclerosis
- Huntington's disease
- Arthritic conditions
- Sleep disorders
- Parkinson's disease
- Epilepsy/seizures
- Heart conditions
- Stroke
- Diabetes

Many medical conditions can be treated to reduce or prevent their effects and early detection is often critical. It is recommended that you get regular health check-ups from your doctor. They can advise you about the potential impacts on your ability to drive safely. They will also be able to advise you about how to manage your condition so you can keep driving as long as possible. You are required (by law) to tell the Department of Transport and Main Roads about any permanent or long-term medical condition you have which may affect your ability to drive safely.

Medications and driving

Some medications can interfere with driving. Side effects are also worse for the first few days when you're given new medication, so you should avoid driving until you know exactly how a new medication affects you. If you are unsure of the possible side effects of your medication, talk to your doctor. Never drive after taking prescribed or over-the-counter medications that could affect your driving. Use public transport, ask someone else to drive or catch a taxi.

Vision and driving

Vision is one of the most important aspects of the driving task. If you cannot see clearly, it's difficult to judge distances, or see potential hazards on the road so you can react appropriately. Vision deteriorates with age, however early detection, through regular eye examinations is key to protecting your vision. With the appropriate treatment many vision impairments can be minimised, prevented or slowed and this may enable you to continue to drive.

Vision problems commonly experienced by older people include:

- Reduced ability to see finely detailed or low contrast/faint objects
- Reduced ability to change focus from near to far objects and vice versa
- Reduced ability to see well at night or in low-light conditions
- Reduced ability to see objects in side/peripheral vision
- Reduced ability to judge distance and speed of objects
- Increased difficulties due to glare, particularly at night.

If you need to wear corrective lenses to meet the eyesight standards for driving, you must wear them whenever you drive. This must also be shown on your licence with an 'S' condition.

While some vision problems can be corrected using glasses or contact lenses, eye diseases are often more serious. The risk of developing eye diseases increases with age, especially after the age of 40. Many eye diseases have very few obvious symptoms in their early stages and can remain undetected until they reach an advanced stage. Early detection is critical for maintaining your vision as many eye diseases can be treated to prevent or reduce their effects. Diseases that can affect your eyes include: macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetes.

If you have an eye disease, consult your doctor or vision specialist as you may need to obtain a medical certificate stating that your vision meets the approved medical standards for driving.

To maintain your vision have your eyes tested regularly. If you are 75 or over your doctor will check your vision everytime you get a new medical certificate. If there is a family history of eye conditions or systemic conditions like diabetes you may be required to go frequently.

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Hearing and driving

Hearing is more important to road safety than many people realise. The sounds that come from horns, sirens, motorcycles or another vehicle's tyres can warn you of hazards when you're driving. You should consult your doctor if you are having difficulty:

- Hearing the sound of your indicators
- Following conversations
- Hearing high pitched noises
- Hearing the television or radio (having to turn them up)

Understanding others and asking people to repeat themselves on a regular basis.

A loss of hearing does not necessarily mean that it is unsafe for you to drive. However, you should consult your doctor to discuss how and where you drive and whether you need to do anything differently.

Disability parking

A disability parking permit is granted to applicants when their ability to walk is severely restricted by a medical condition or disability. A permit is also granted to organisations that transport individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for the granting of a disability parking permit and who are required to enter or exit the vehicle when accessing a disability parking bay.

The Australian Disability Parking Permit provides permit holders with a universal permit design recognised in every state of Australia. The Queensland Blue disability parking permit is no longer valid and should not be used. Newly approved applicants will be granted a parking permit for a period ranging from 6 months to 5 years.

** Higher rates apply from mobile phones and pay phones.*