

# **Driving after a stroke**

## **Information for patients and their families**

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Driving is a means of independence that many people value. It is a skill that is both physically and mentally demanding. This includes areas like concentration, attention, quick judgment, vision and endurance. A stroke can affect any or all of these areas, and can affect your ability to be safe while driving. About half of those who have had a stroke will return to driving. People recover from a stroke at different rates.

**It is illegal to drive with a suspended license.**

## **What are the rules in Ontario about driving after stroke?**

In Ontario, your doctor must report to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) that you have had a stroke. This is because it might be dangerous for you to drive a car.

The rules in Ontario are:

- You cannot drive for at least one month.
- Your doctor must assess your readiness to drive.
- You may return to driving if you have no major changes in:
  - your vision
  - your physical skills
  - your thinking such as problem-solving or judgment

These areas must be assessed by your health care team.

- When your doctor is not sure if you are ready to drive, he or she may tell you to go to a special driving centre for more tests.
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## When should I be tested for driving?

This should be decided on an individual basis. You need to discuss this with your occupational therapist, your doctor or both.

## What is the process for getting my license back?

The timing is different for everyone. This is because strokes affect everyone differently. Your doctor or occupational therapist can help you decide when you are ready.

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) or your doctor may require your driving skills to be tested. This is called an assessment and may include:

1. A written test.
2. An on-road driving test.
3. A vision test.

The letter you get from the MTO will explain what to do next.

**Ask your doctor or occupational therapist about Ministry of Transportation Approved Driving Assessment Centres in your area where you can take these tests.**

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## What is a driving assessment?

There are two parts to a driving assessment.

### Part One: Pre-road tests

- Your doctor or occupational therapist will do these tests with you at the hospital or at a driving centre.
- They look at your vision, judgment, thinking and physical skills.
- These tests will show whether you are ready for the on-road test, you need more practice or you should think about different options.

### Part Two: On-road test

- This test will be done in a car with a Certified Driving Instructor.
- They will look at your driving skills, such as safety, following directions and your physical ability to drive a vehicle.
- You will have to cover the cost, which is about \$500 to \$800. This is why it is important you wait until you are ready.

**You must be referred for the driving assessment by a doctor.**

## What will the driving assessment tell me?

1. You can return to driving.
2. With changes made to your car, you may be able to return to driving.
3. It is too soon to return to driving, you need drivers rehabilitation. After practicing or learning new ways to drive, you may return to driving.
4. You are not able to return to driving.

## What if I am no longer able to drive?

This may be a very hard time for you and your family. It is normal to feel upset, angry, or a sense of loss. It may be hard to accept this decision, but there are other options for you.

**Ask your occupational therapist about resources in your community that can help you get to places you need to go.**