

Driving, Diabetes & You

Research shows that people with diabetes don't have more car accidents than anyone else. That's good news! But there are a few things you will need to know about driving and having diabetes.

Medical Conditions and Medications

New laws (commonly known as 'Jet's Law') came into effect Australia wide in March 2013. 'Jet's Law' makes it mandatory for everyone with a New South Wales drivers' licence to report any long term or permanent medical conditions that could affect their ability to drive safely to NSW Roads and Maritime Services.

Diabetes is one of those medical conditions that NSW Roads and Maritime Services require us to report (along with heart and lung conditions, arthritis and so forth). Diabetes has the potential to impact on your ability to drive safely, particularly if it is poorly controlled. Your doctor (specialist or general practitioner) will need to provide a certificate or medical report stating your fitness to drive.

Remember your doctor can only give you a favourable medical report if your diabetes is under control, that means your HbA1c is less than 75 mmol/mol (or 9%).

Drivers who fail to report their medical condition may receive a maximum \$4500 penalty or be disqualified from driving for a certain period.

Applying for a Learner Licence

To apply for a learner licence you must:

- be at least 16 years of age
- complete the Driver Licence Application/Renewal Form (F3000)
- show suitable evidence of identity
- pass an eyesight test
- declare that you are medically fit to learn to drive the class of motor vehicle. Due to your diabetes you are required to show a medical certificate from your doctor stating that you are medically fit to drive or ride a motorbike safely.
- pay the road rules test fee and pass the test
- pay the required learner licence fee.

For further information visit:

<http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/licensing/downloads/gettingyourdriverlicence.pdf>

Driving and Hypos

Having diabetes means that hypoglycaemia (low Blood Glucose Levels-BGL's) can occur at any time, including while driving. It is important to have a good understanding of your BGL fluctuations, including being able to recognise your usual symptoms of low BGLs ('hypos').

It is **Very Important** to always test your BGL before starting your car. It is also a good idea to carry some 'hypo' food with you in your car.

It is recommended that you do not drive unless your BGL is above 5 mmol/L, and that you re-check your BGL every two hours while driving.

Driving and Hyperglycaemia

If your HbA1c is above 75 mmol/mol (9%), indicating poor control or your BGL is above 15 mmol/L, it is also recommended that you do not drive. This is because high BGL's can:

- make you feel unwell
- affect your ability to concentrate and react quickly
- make you thirsty and cause an increased need to urinate, which can distract you while driving

Drink Driving and Drug Taking

It is against the law to drink alcohol and take drugs while driving. The effects of alcohol and drugs can affect your decision-making, and you are more likely to take risks, which could lead to you having a car accident.

- Remember, if you plan on drinking or taking drugs – **DON'T DRIVE**
- Arrange for one of your friends (who is not drinking or taking drugs) to be the designated driver, arrange to be taken home by a family member or friend or catch a taxi home. **What is your plan B?**
- If you are drinking you are at risk of having a delayed 'hypo'. (refer to the Young People and Alcohol fact sheet)

Staying Safe while Driving

- Always check your BGL before starting off
- Always keep 'hypo' food in the car – that won't melt or be affected by the heat
- Never drink alcohol and drive
- Never take drugs and drive
- Remember to buckle up.

Resources

<http://www.austroads.com.au/assessing-fitness-to-drive>

<http://www.ndss.com.au/Documents/NDSS/Resources/DrivingDiabetes/DrivingandDiabetesBooklet.pdf>