



## Aging Drivers

### Questions and Answers

As we get older, we all have to make decisions on how much we drive, what time of day we drive and when it might even be time to stop driving altogether. There are also some medical and driver licence renewal processes that occur over time.

This website is designed to give you answers to some of the most frequently asked questions we hear from aging drivers. We believe the more information you have, the better equipped you will be to make the right decisions. This will also help you prepare for anything you may wish to discuss with your doctor related to driving. For additional information, please feel free to call Alberta Transportation anonymously at 780-427-8230 or toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000. Office hours are 8:15am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday.

#### General Requirements to Renew a Driver's Licence

**1. Is there a specific age when I will have to give up my driver's licence?**

No. As long as you can safely operate a vehicle, you can renew your licence at any age. Alberta Transportation renews your licence based on your functional and cognitive ability to drive safely, regardless of your age. Though rare, there are people older than 100 who still have a licence.

**2. Does Alberta Transportation discourage people from driving beyond a certain age?**

No. Our team at Alberta Transportation encourages you to drive as long as you can do it safely, regardless of your age. It is about finding a balance between maximizing your mobility and ensuring your safety and that of everyone else on the road.

**3. Do I have to provide a medical or undergo a road test at a certain age?**

Yes. In Alberta, a Medical Examination for Motor Vehicle Operators report is required for renewal of driver licence Classes 3, 5, 6 or 7 at age 75, age 80 and every two years thereafter. The same report is required for holders of Class 1, 2 and 4 commercial drivers' licences every five years until age 45, every two years until age 65, and then annually after the age of 65.

There is **no specific age** when a road test is required, but a road test may be required by Alberta Transportation to help determine your ability to drive safely regardless of age.

**4. Why is a medical required at certain ages?**

The age requirements are based on research that shows some medical conditions and cognitive challenges are more common at certain ages. That said, Alberta Transportation evaluates your ability to drive safely on an **individual** basis, regardless of your age.

**5. Do I have to disclose my medical condition(s) before I can renew my licence?**

Yes. You are **legally obligated** to disclose any medical conditions that may affect your ability to drive safely. A list of medical conditions and further information is available [here](#).

**6. Does my doctor have to disclose any medical and/or physical conditions that may affect my ability to drive?**

Doctors or other medical professionals are not legally required to report suspected medically-at-risk drivers to Alberta Transportation. However, they are also protected from legal action should they do so. This legal protection encourages doctors to report suspected at-risk drivers, which helps protect all road users.

**7. How does Alberta Transportation decide which medical conditions should be monitored?**

Alberta Transportation uses the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) Medical Standards for Drivers to establish minimum medical and visual qualifications for safe driving. You can view these standards here:

[www.transportation.alberta.ca/content/docType45/Production/CCMTADriverMedicalStandardsAugust2013.pdf](http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/content/docType45/Production/CCMTADriverMedicalStandardsAugust2013.pdf).

CCMTA Medical Standards for Drivers reflect the continued collaboration over the past 25 years between the provinces and territories of Canada to create national standards for driver fitness. The production of this document was a result of this collaboration, including representation of all the provinces and territories with expert individuals in these jurisdictions who contributed to the final product.

**8. I was given a longer term between required medicals on my current licence. Now my latest renewal notice indicates my term is back to one year between required medicals. Can I retain a longer term?**

If there are no changes to your health and your medical condition is stable, you may re-qualify for the longer term. Contact Alberta Transportation to request an extension.

**9. Can my doctor take away my driver's licence?**

Only the Registrar of Motor Vehicles has the authority to cancel or suspend a driver's licence.

**10. I have a condition code A (adequate lenses) on my driver's licence but I have had a procedure to correct my vision. Do I need to have the condition code removed or can I continue to drive with that condition on my driver's licence.**

As long as there is a condition code A on your licence you are required to wear corrective lenses. You can attend any Alberta Registry agent to undergo a vision screening test to have the condition code A removed.

## **Testing**

### **11. Can any doctor do the medical report or is there a list of approved doctors to go to?**

Most general practitioners and geriatric specialists can complete medical forms required to renew your licence. Your doctor will either complete the form or refer you to another doctor.

### **12. What is involved in the medical evaluation?**

The basic medical evaluation looks at key areas that may affect the ability to safely operate a motor vehicle:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Cognitive abilities
- Overall health

If you have a medical and/or physical condition, your doctor may look at whether that condition affects your ability to drive safely. Your doctor may also recommend a road test or further cognitive and/or medical testing before completing your driver's medical.

### **13. How does Alberta Transportation make sure that the doctor actually did the evaluation and did not simply sign the form?**

Alberta Transportation is confident that doctors have their patients' best interests in mind and are conducting the evaluations appropriately. Doctors are aware that it is against the law to falsify a document.

### **14. When I complete my medical with my doctor and the doctor recommends a road test what does that mean I have to do?**

All recommendations for a road test from a physician are reviewed by Alberta Transportation, Driver Fitness and Monitoring to determine if the road test is required. If your medical was completed for renewal of your driver's licence, you would still submit this to any Alberta Registry Agent Office. If it is determined the road test is required, you will receive a letter from Driver Fitness and Monitoring.

### **15. If I undergo a functional or cognitive assessment are the results provided to Driver Fitness and Monitoring?**

There is no requirement to have the results of your assessment provided to Driver Fitness and Monitoring. There are facilities that will forward the results of the assessment to Driver Fitness and Monitoring for review however, Driver Fitness and Monitoring will require a medical report as well to make a decision on an individual's licensing. The

results of your assessment should be sent to your doctor and discussed between you and your doctor.

### **Quick Facts on DriveABLE**

#### **16. Is DriveABLE a government test?**

DriveABLE is a private company and not affiliated with the Government of Alberta.

#### **17. I have heard of people being referred to DriveABLE for testing and then their licences get revoked because they fail the test. Why does DriveABLE have the ability to revoke a licence?**

Only the Registrar of Motor Vehicles has the authority to cancel or suspend a driver's licence.

The assessment results are reviewed by the doctor with the patient and can be provided to Alberta Transportation. The Registrar uses the physician's report along with a variety of other information to determine your ability to drive safely, such as:

- Medical documentation
- Driving record
- Road test results

If a medical condition requires further review or interpretation as to how it relates to the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) Medical Standards for Drivers, the file is referred to the Medical Review Committee for advice, a Committee comprised of physicians

#### **18. What is a DriveABLE test and what is involved?**

The DriveABLE test is composed of two tests. The DriveABLE Cognitive Assessment Tool (DCAT) presents 6 tasks on a touch screen that measure the cognitive processes needed for safe driving and predict the actual on-road performance. The DriveABLE On-Road Evaluation (DORE) is an on-road evaluation that tests specifically for decline in the cognitive skills needed for safe driving. **The DriveABLE test is not mandatory.** It is a tool your doctor may use to further test your cognitive abilities. DriveABLE charges a fee to the patient for this test.

### **Quick Facts on the SIMARD MD Test**

#### **19. What is the SIMARD MD test and what is involved in the test?**

The SIMARD MD is a test doctors use to detect potential cognitive challenges that may affect your ability to drive safely. **The SIMARD MD test is not mandatory.** Your doctor decides whether or not to use the test as part of your evaluation. The test is taken in your doctor's office and takes approximately 20 minutes. It involves the doctor asking

you a series of questions such as identifying objects found in a grocery store or asking you to repeat letters or numbers in sequence.

The SIMARD MD test was developed by the University of Alberta's Medically At-Risk Driver Centre.

This test is conducted free of charge to the patient.

**20. If I fail the SIMARD MD test do I lose my licence?**

No. The test is a screening tool used to identify potential cognitive challenges. Based on its results, your doctor may recommend further cognitive testing and/or a functional assessment. The assessment results are reviewed by the doctor with the patient and can be provided to Alberta Transportation. Reviewing Officers review the doctor's assessment along with a variety of other information to determine your ability to drive safely, such as medical documentation, driving record and road test results.

**Process – Renewing or Not Renewing a Licence**

**21. What if I do not agree with my doctor's evaluation? Is there an appeal process?**

Alberta Transportation considers appeals on a case-by-case basis. If you do not agree with your doctor's assessment, you can forward your concerns to Alberta Transportation.:

- Alberta Transportation will review your file using a variety of information to determine your ability to drive safely. This can include medical documentation, your driving record, and results from road and/or functional tests, for example.
- The Medical Review Committee may also review your file and provide advice to the Reviewing Officer.
- Based on all this advice and information, the Reviewing Officer makes a decision to renew your licence, renew your licence with conditions, or suspend your licence.

**22. My doctor said I am okay to drive during the day, but that I should not drive at night due to my vision. My doctor will not approve my medical form. Is there something I can do about this or is there a way to keep my licence if I agree not to drive at night?**

You may be able to get a conditional licence that restricts driving to certain times of the day, locations and/or distance from your home. Other conditions may apply such as the need for annual road or vision tests in order to renew your licence.

**23. Can I take a driving course that is specially designed for older drivers?**

Yes. Several driver training schools in Alberta offer programs for older drivers. You can contact a school for further information.