

Tasmanian Older Drivers' Handbook

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This publication incorporates information to help older drivers drive safely and responsibly in Tasmania. It does not contain all of the laws relating to licensing in Tasmania.

While every effort is made to ensure that the information is accurate and conforms to Tasmanian legislation, this publication must not be construed as a legal interpretation of legislation.

All enquiries regarding this publication should be directed to the Transport Enquiry Service on 1300 851 225 or the Department of State Growth, PO Box 1002, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001.

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Tasmanian Older Drivers

Older drivers are under-represented in crash statistics because they generally:

- are safe and cautious, less likely to speed and usually maintain safer following distances
- don't tend to engage in risk taking behaviour such as drink-driving
- are very good at assessing their own driving skills, and have the means to choose when and where to drive within their limits, and when to cease driving.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to helping older Tasmanians retain their independent mobility by whatever means they choose, for as long as possible. To support this, it has removed mandatory driving assessments for drivers aged 85 and over.

This guide provides information on the driver licensing processes and tips to help you keep moving. It also contains guidelines for assessing your own driving ability and resources to help you plan ahead in case you need to give up driving for any reason.

Contents

Tasmanian Older Drivers	1
Keeping moving by car	3
Assessing your driving skills	4
Prolonging your driving career	6
1. A clear vision	6
2. Maintain control	6
3. Choosing a car	7
4. Maintaining your car	7
5. Stay alert	10
6. Avoid fatigue	10
7. Refresh your knowledge	11
Medical conditions and medication	18
Medical conditions and driving	18
Medications	22
Licensing	24
From age 65	24
Ancillary Certificate holders	24
Medical Assessments	25
Concerns about someone's driving	28
Life beyond driving	29
Moving house?	30
Sharing the load	30
Home delivery services	30
Keeping moving – by public transport	31
Keeping moving – on foot	32
Stay safe while walking	32
Keeping moving – by bike	33
Keeping moving – by mobility scooter	34
Finding out about alternative transport schemes	35
Taxis	35
Community Transport	35
Useful contacts	36
Service Tasmania shops	37

Keeping moving by car

Most older Tasmanians rely on their car to get around – for shopping, appointments or visiting friends and family. Maintaining mobility in later life also helps to delay the physical and mental decline associated with ageing.

Driving is a complicated task, requiring continuous concentration and good health. Ability, not age, determines whether you are a safe driver. Older drivers as a group are very safe and responsible drivers – most have years of driving experience and a good driving record.

However, it's important to remember that the ageing process can affect a range of skills essential to driving – including eyesight, memory, decision-making and reaction times. Moreover, in the event that you are involved in a crash, the older you are the more likely you are to be killed or injured – due to increasing physical fragility.

It is important for all drivers, regardless of age, to regularly and honestly assess their own driving capabilities to keep themselves and others safe.



Assessing your driving skills

Drivers who accurately assess their driving skills are more likely to adjust their driving habits and stay safe on the road for longer.

Your doctor will regularly check whether you are medically fit to drive. However, it's your responsibility to ensure your driving skills and knowledge are up to scratch every time you drive – and if they are not, to take action to address any problem.

You should regularly ask yourself these questions:

- Are you having trouble seeing signs, road markings, kerbs, medians, other vehicles or pedestrians, especially at night?
- Do you find it difficult to shift your focus from near to far objects?
- Are you having trouble turning your head or looking over your shoulder to check for traffic?
- Do you have trouble moving your foot from the accelerator to the brake pedal, or turning the steering wheel?
- Do your joints ache after even a short drive?
- Do you have trouble reversing?
- Is it getting harder to judge gaps in the traffic when merging or turning at intersections?
- Does your mind sometimes wander when you drive?
- Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the traffic environment, particularly when turning at intersections?
- Are you sometimes confused as to who should give way?
- Have you found yourself driving too slowly and holding up traffic?
- Have you recently been 'honked' at by other motorists?
- Are you missing (or reacting more slowly to) unexpected hazards, such as pedestrians crossing the road?
- Are you feeling more tired while driving – even on short trips?
- Are you having trouble judging distance, resulting in a small collision in the carpark or with the mailbox?
- Have you had a near miss or actual crash in the last three years?
- Has a friend or family member recently said they are worried about your driving?
- Do you sometimes get lost on familiar routes?
- Has your doctor suggested you limit your driving or think about stopping driving altogether?

If you answered 'yes' to some of the above questions, it's not necessarily a sign that it's time to give up driving. But it may indicate areas where you need to take action to avoid endangering yourself or other road users – particularly if you answered 'yes' to any of the last five questions.

If in doubt:

- talk to others who are in a similar situation to you
- listen to the people who know you best and care about you most
- discuss your driving with your doctor.

Many mature drivers adjust their driving or use additional vehicle features to compensate for any weaknesses (see the following section for ideas).

A full medical fitness to drive assessment conducted by a doctor is still the best way to determine if you are safe to continue driving.

If you drive a public passenger vehicle such as a bus or taxi, safe driving is even more important because when you drive you're responsible for your passengers' safety on the road as well as your own. It is especially important for you to regularly assess your driving ability.



Prolonging your driving career

Many older drivers compensate for the effects of ageing through the use of various coping strategies. For example, they might avoid driving at night, during busy traffic times or in bad weather, or they may decide to drive only in familiar areas. They might only use the car for essential trips – or choose to drive with a companion.

The following are some other suggestions to help you keep driving safely.

1. A clear vision

- If you need glasses or contacts for driving, make sure you always wear them and that the prescription is current.
- Don't wear sunglasses or tinted glasses at night, unless they are prescription glasses.
- Drive during the day where possible.
- Keep the windscreen, mirrors and headlights clean.
- If possible, choose a car with larger dials on the instrument panel and make sure they are bright enough for you to see them clearly.
- Have regular vision check-ups with your optometrist.

2. Maintain control

Diminished strength, coordination and flexibility can significantly affect your ability to safely control your vehicle.

If you're finding it difficult to turn your head or reach controls:

- see your doctor for advice about exercise and/or physiotherapy or alternative treatments
- see an occupational therapist about specialised equipment to make it easier to steer and operate the foot pedals.

If you are worried that your health may be affecting your ability to drive safely, talk it over with your doctor. They may also be able to advise you on other ways to keep fit to drive. You can ask a family member or friend to go to the doctor with you.

3. Choosing a car

When buying a car choose:

- the newest model you can afford - generally the newer the car, the more safety features it has
- an automatic transmission with features such as power steering and an anti-lock braking system (ABS)
- a car that enables you to sit higher above the road, allowing you to more easily swing your legs in and out
- a car with larger side mirrors and adjust them to reduce the driver's side blind spot. Special rear-view mirrors are also available to cover blind spots
- a car with a good safety rating - you can find car safety ratings at www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au.

If your car is fitted with an airbag, sit at least 25 centimetres (or about 1 foot) from the steering wheel to reduce the chances of injury from the airbag during a crash.

4. Maintaining your car

It's important to keep your car in good condition. Have it serviced regularly, and ask the mechanic to do a quick safety check for you.

If anything out of the ordinary happens to your car – strange noises, rattling etc, then have it checked out. Don't wait until it creates a dangerous situation. An early check can often help you save on expensive repairs.

If your car had particular equipment when it was first registered, then that equipment should still be there and operating. For example, if there was a left side mirror and it falls off, it needs to be replaced.

Here are some simple safety checks you can do yourself, as well as having regular servicing and inspections by a mechanic.

Lights

Burned out light bulbs are not always easy to detect from the driver's seat but they can be a serious traffic hazard.

You can check your lights with someone else standing in front and behind the car to check that they all work. Regularly clean dirt and dust off all lights.

A broken indicator is usually identified by a marked change in the flashing speed of the turn signal indicator. No flashing at all may also

indicate a defective flasher unit.

If other people flash their lights at you at night when you are using your low beam head lights, this probably means that your head lights are aimed too high. Your head lights should be tested by a mechanic or at your local garage and properly adjusted.

Tyres

In your car owner manual you should find the recommended tyre pressure for the tyres on your car. A tyre should hold its pressure for about three months. If you find that your tyres are losing pressure more frequently than this:

- Check that the valve caps are in place and are screwed down firmly
- Take your car to a garage and get the tyres checked. You may need new tyres

Remember when checking the pressure in your tyres to also check your spare tyre.

There needs to be clear and visible tread on all parts of the tyre that meet the road. Your tyres should be free from cuts, gouges, cracks and bulges. Regularly check your tyres at least once a week to ensure treads are at a safe level, evenly worn, and have no nails embedded in them or other damage.

Replace worn or damaged tyres because they are very likely to get punctures, and are particularly dangerous in wet and slippery conditions.



Brakes

Brakes are essential for safety. However they are very easily overlooked when checking your car.

To check brakes, turn the engine off, press the brake pedal as hard as you would if you had to stop suddenly in traffic and hold the pressure for thirty seconds. The brake pedal should not noticeably sink towards the floor. If it does, consult a mechanic.

To check power-assisted brakes, turn the engine off and tap the brake pedal several times to use up any remaining vacuum that might be stored in the brakes. Push and hold the brake pedal down and then start the engine. The pedal should move a small amount towards the floor. After this initial movement the pedal should not sink any further. If it does, consult a mechanic.

When you use the brakes on the road:

- The car should not pull to one side or the other
- The car's motion should not feel jerky
- You should not feel any pulsations in the brake pedal except for emergency stops with Antilock Braking System (ABS)
- The brakes should not make grinding or squealing noises
- The brake pedal should not go down more than two thirds of the distance to the floor regardless of brake type.

Wipers

- Make sure the wipers on your car remove water from your windows without leaving smudges and smears.
- Make sure the wipers operate without jerking or skipping. Check all wiper speeds.
- Remember to fill your windscreen washer water bottles when you check the oil and water.
- Replace your wiper blades when they become noisy or fail to clear rain completely.

If any of these things happen consult a mechanic immediately.

- Engine leaks - it can be an indicator that a dangerous problem is developing
- Steering problems - such as the car pulling to one side, finding it much easier or harder to turn the wheel while driving, strange noises when you turn the steering wheel.

5. Stay alert

Slowing reaction times can make it a challenge to divide your attention between multiple activities and being able to react quickly to situations that arise, often without warning.

- It's your choice whether to drive a manual or automatic car (unless a condition has been placed on your licence requiring you to drive an automatic). However, driving an automatic gives you one less thing to think about – which might help if you find yourself getting flustered in complex traffic situations.
- Refresh your knowledge of the area in which you will be driving by looking at a street map. Pay attention to changes such as roundabouts or a one-way street system.
- Plan your route. Drive where you are familiar with the road conditions and traffic patterns. Consider choosing routes with less traffic and avoiding manoeuvres you find difficult. For example, if you want to avoid making a right turn on a busy street so that you don't have to cross oncoming traffic, you may be able to plan an alternative route involving left turns only.
- Drive during the day where possible and avoid rush-hours.
- Always keep a safe distance (see page 17 for information on following distances) between you and the car in front to give yourself plenty of time to stop.
- Continually scan the sides of the road as well as ahead and regularly check your rear-view mirrors.
- Keep alert to sounds outside your car. Limit conversation and background noise (such as the radio).

6. Avoid fatigue

Fatigue is a contributing factor in many road crashes and affects people of all ages.

- Be aware of the side-effects of medication (prescription or over-the-counter) which might affect sleep patterns or make you drowsy, particularly on longer trips.
- Assess the length and complexity of your journey in relation to your present state of health. Consider taking a stopover to divide up a longer trip, or share the driving. Try having a break, stretch your legs and have a coffee to break up the journey.
- Drive when you are least tired (for example, in the morning).

7. Refresh your knowledge

Road rules refresher

It's a good idea to refresh your knowledge from time to time, so you know about any new road rules, signs and markings. The Tasmanian Road Rules Handbook is available for purchase at any Service Tasmania shop or online at www.transport.tas.gov.au.

You can also test your road rules knowledge by taking the practice driver knowledge test online at www.transport.tas.gov.au/drkts. The practice driver knowledge test is just like the real driver knowledge test at Service Tasmania shops.

The test has 35 questions and you can mark each question as you go, so you know straight away if you answered it correctly. The test is anonymous, so no one knows how many times you take the test or what your results are.



Following are some road rules that can cause confusion for drivers.
The red car cannot proceed, the green car can proceed when safe.

Dividing lines - crossing

Single broken line



You can cross the lines to turn onto or off the road (e.g. into another road, carpark or driveway), overtake or do a u-turn.

Single solid line



You can cross the line if you're turning onto or off the road (e.g. into another road, carpark or driveway).

You cannot cross the line to overtake or do a u-turn.

Double broken lines



You can cross the lines if you're turning onto or off the road (e.g. into another road, carpark or driveway).

You cannot cross the lines to overtake or do a u-turn.

Broken line left of a solid line



You can cross the lines to turn onto or off the road (e.g. into another road, carpark or driveway), overtake or do a u-turn.

Solid line left of a broken line



You can cross the lines to turn onto or off the road (e.g. into another road, carpark or driveway).

You cannot cross the lines to overtake or do a u-turn.

Double solid lines



You cannot cross the lines for any reason, including to turn, overtake or do a u-turn.

Roundabouts - indicating

Turning left



When you're leaving the roundabout less than half way round it:

- indicate left when approaching and leaving the roundabout
- on a multi-lane roundabout, enter and leave the roundabout from the left lane, or a lane with a left arrow on it.

Going straight ahead



When you're going straight ahead at a roundabout:

- on a multi-lane roundabout, you can enter and leave the roundabout from any lane with a straight ahead arrow
- on a multi-lane roundabout, if there are no arrows marked in the lanes, you can enter and leave the roundabout from any lane
- you only need to indicate left when leaving the roundabout (where practical).

Turning right



When you're going more than halfway round a roundabout:

- indicate right as you approach the roundabout
- on a multi-lane roundabout, enter from the right lane, or a lane with a right arrow on it
- indicate left as you leave the roundabout (where practical).

The red car must give way, the green and blue cars can proceed when safe.

Giving way

Giving way means that you must stop or slow down to avoid a possible crash when your car's path might cross another road user's path. If you have stopped, remain stopped, until it is safe to drive on. If you're moving, slow down and be prepared to stop.

No one has complete "right of way". You must always drive safely to avoid crashing with other road users (including pedestrians). For example, if someone is trying to change lanes at the same time as you, you should wait until it's safe. Below are some examples of giving way. For the full give way rules, see the *Tasmanian Road Rules Handbook*.

Turning right at an uncontrolled intersection



Before turning right at an uncontrolled intersection (with no signs, road markings or traffic signals) you must give way to:

- traffic coming from your right that is going straight ahead or turning right
- oncoming traffic that is going straight ahead or turning left
- pedestrians on the road you're turning into.

Turning right at a controlled intersection



Before turning right at an intersection controlled by a stop sign or give way sign you must give way to:

- traffic coming from your left that is going straight ahead or turning right
- traffic coming from your right that is going straight ahead or turning right
- oncoming traffic going straight ahead or turning left
- pedestrians on the road you're turning into.

Giving way at roundabouts

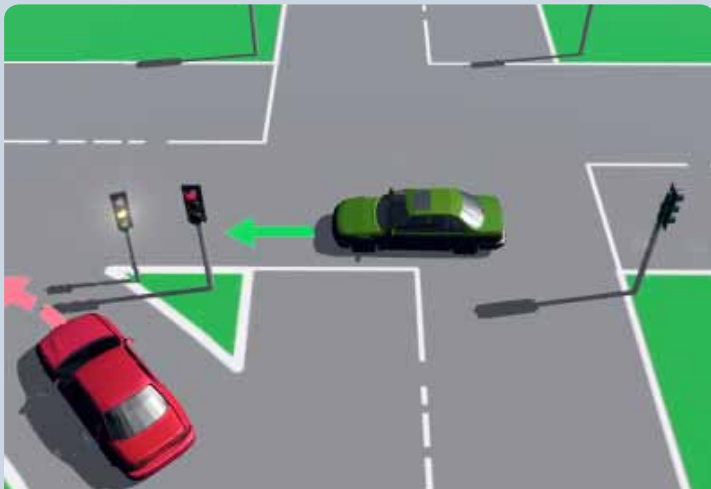


When approaching a roundabout, adjust your speed to stop safely if needed.

Before entering a roundabout, give way to all traffic in the roundabout.

Giving way

Giving way at a slip lane



Before turning left using a slip lane, you must give way to:

- traffic on the road you're entering
- oncoming traffic turning right at the intersection
- any other traffic or pedestrians in the slip lane.

Giving way to vehicles in a slip lane



If you're making a U-turn at an intersection you must give way to vehicles in the slip lane.

If you're driving straight ahead or turning right at an intersection (either controlled or uncontrolled), you do not need to give way to vehicles in the slip lane.

Giving way to pedestrians



You must give way to pedestrians in most turning situations.

For example when turning at an uncontrolled intersection, you must give way to any pedestrians on the road you are turning into.

Giving way to pedestrians

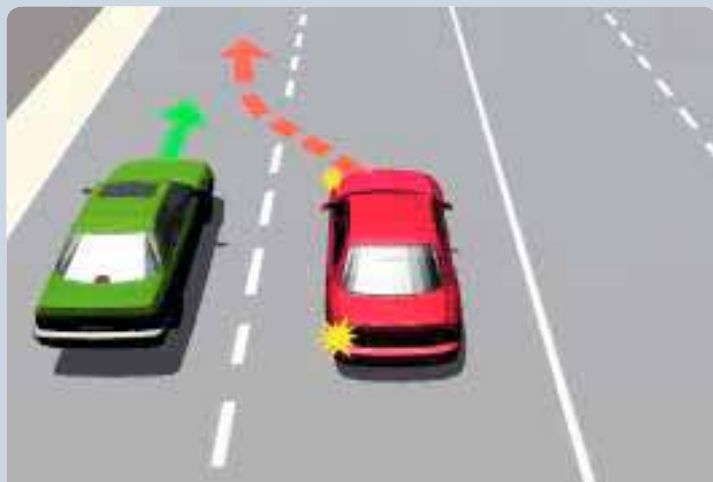


When entering the road from a carpark or driveway, you must give way to any pedestrians, before pulling out. This includes pedestrians on the footpath or on the road you're entering.

The red car must give way, the green car can proceed when safe.

Giving way when changing lanes

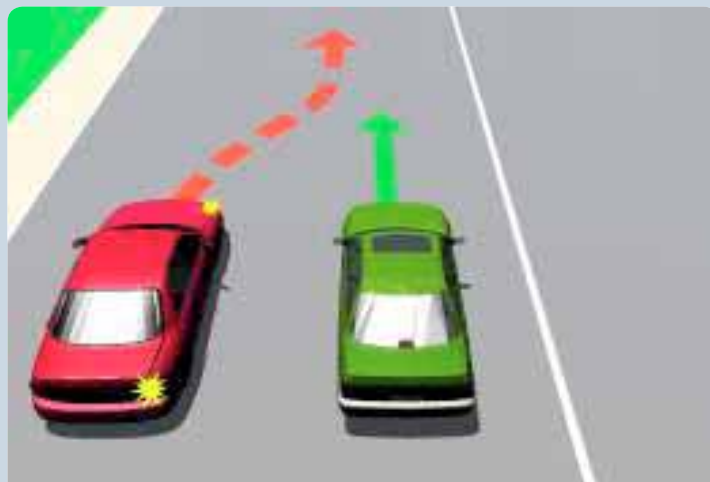
Moving from one marked lane to another



When you're about to move from one marked lane to another marked lane of traffic:

- indicate and
- give way to any traffic in the lane you're moving into.

Moving from one unmarked lane to another



When you're about to move from one line of traffic into another line of traffic with no lane markings:

- indicate and
- give way to any traffic in the lane you're moving into.

Changing lanes when your lane ends



If your marked lanes ends:

- indicate and
- give way to any traffic in the lane you're moving into

You must give way if the lane markings continue to the end of the lane.

Merging



When you're in a line of traffic **merging** with another line of traffic moving the same way give way to any vehicle ahead of you.

This rule only applies where there are **no lanes marked** on the road.

(This is sometimes called the "zip merge" rule).

Child restraints

There may be times when you are transporting your grandchildren in your car. You must ensure that a child:

- under 6 months old is restrained in an approved rearward facing child restraint (e.g. infant capsule)
- aged 6 months to less than 4 years old is restrained in either an approved rearward facing child restraint or an approved forward facing child restraint with inbuilt harness (e.g. child safety seat)
- aged four years to less than seven years old is restrained in either an approved forward facing child restraint with an inbuilt harness or an approved booster seat restrained by a correctly adjusted and fastened seatbelt.

There are also laws about where children can sit in vehicles:

- If a car has two or more rows of seats, then children under four years must not travel in the front seat
- If all seats, other than the front seats, are being used by children under seven years, children aged between four and six years (inclusive) may travel in the front seat, provided they use an approved child restraint or booster seat.

Only use a child restraint that conforms to Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1754.

Child restraints must be correctly installed and adjusted for the baby or child's size and weight.

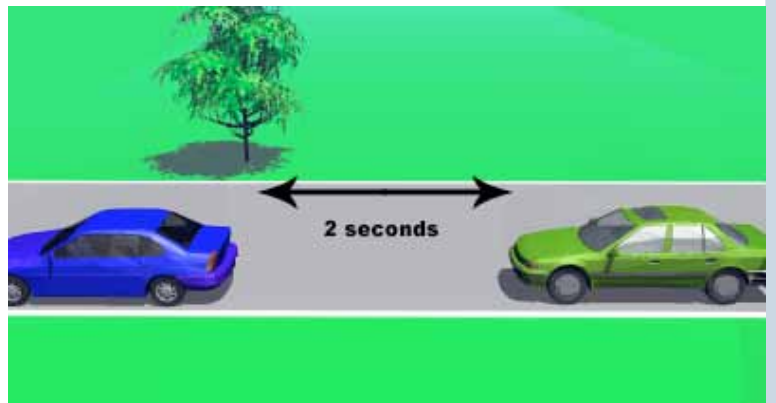
Child restraint sales and fitting are available at Hobart and Launceston RACT branches.

Following distance

To safely respond to hazards in good weather conditions at lower speeds (under 60 km/h), leave at least a 2-second gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front. At higher speeds (more than 60 km/h) or in bad road or weather conditions, leave a 3 to 4-second gap.

To work out the safe following distance gap -

- As the vehicle in front passes an object on the side of the road start counting the number of seconds, e.g. "one thousand and one, one thousand and two"
- If you read the object before you finish counting, you're following too close. Gently slow down until your gap is increased
- If another driver cuts in front of you, slow down to keep a safe following distance



Medical conditions and medication

Medical conditions and driving

Driving is a complex task that involves the coordination of a number of physical and mental skills. Any impairment to your physical and mental capabilities due to a medical condition may affect your ability to drive and increase your risk of a crash.

All drivers, regardless of age need to be medically fit to drive.

Some medical conditions can affect your ability to drive. A medical condition may be anything from a temporary disability such as a broken bone, to a progressive disability such as arthritis or Parkinson's disease.

Normal ageing is associated with the onset of medical conditions, many of which have safety implications.

If you develop a medical condition or your existing medical condition changes you should talk to your doctor about whether it may affect your driving ability.

It is your legal responsibility to tell the Registrar of Motor Vehicles about any changes in your medical fitness to drive, not your doctor's.

To tell the Registrar of Motor Vehicles about your medical condition, you can ring the Transport Enquiry Service on 1300 851 225 or complete the MR138 Self Notification form

Following are some common medical conditions that can adversely affect your driving ability.

Hearing

If you suffer from loss of hearing it is probably still safe for you to drive. You should still consult your doctor, especially if you drive commercial vehicles such as trucks, taxis or buses. Occasionally hearing loss can be accompanied by other problems such as keeping balance. Loss of balance can be a real problem for drivers. If you have balance problems consult your doctor about your driving.

Vision

As we age, our vision deteriorates. Generally this is both natural and inevitable, but it is also one of the biggest threats to safe driving. The main things that can happen are -

- The ability of the eye to focus decreases
- It becomes harder to change focus from distant to near objects and vice-versa
- You need more light to see well
- Glare becomes a problem
- The ability to see objects to the side decreases
- Colours are harder to distinguish
- You may have trouble telling how close you are to an object

If you are prescribed glasses for driving, make sure you wear them. It is also important to have your eyes tested regularly.

Eye diseases

The deterioration in vision that happens as part of normal ageing can be worsened by particular eye diseases which are more common in the elderly. If you suffer from an eye disease, you should consult your doctor or specialist to find out if it is safe to drive and under what conditions.

Cataracts

Cataracts are a clouding of the eye's lens. They can make it difficult, sometimes impossible, to see. Surgery can often help - ask your optometrist or eye doctor.

Cataracts cause problems with glare, with the eye taking a long time to recover from bright light. They also create difficulty in seeing objects against some backgrounds and in driving at night.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an eye disease that destroys the optic nerve, leading to loss of peripheral vision (side, top and/or bottom vision). It is important that an eye care practitioner checks your eyes thoroughly, at least every two years.

Diabetes

Diabetes can often affect vision, so if you suffer from diabetes you should have your eyes checked at least once every 12 months. Untreated diabetes can result in an eye condition where there are "patches" where you can't see.

Macular Degeneration

Macular Degeneration is the name given to a group of degenerative diseases of the retina that cause progressive, painless loss of central vision, affecting the ability to see fine detail, drive, read and recognise faces.

As with other eye diseases, it's important to consult your doctor or optometrist.

Epilepsy

If you suffer from epilepsy you will need to consult your doctor or specialist as to whether you should be driving. Your condition will also need to be monitored on a regular basis.

Diabetes

As well as affecting your vision, diabetes can also cause you to lose consciousness from a hypoglycaemic episode.

If your diabetes is managed by diet alone you should be fine to drive. However if your diabetes is not being managed you should not drive until you are cleared by your doctor.

Dementia

If you're worried about increasing lapses in memory, or other changes in thinking or behaviour, it's very important to talk to a doctor. Sometimes stress, depression, pain or other medical conditions can be mistaken for Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. That's why getting a diagnosis is important. And if dementia is confirmed, it means you can find out what can be done to help.

Parkinson's disease

Some of the physical symptoms of Parkinson's disease may restrict your movement and interfere with your ability to control a vehicle. Parkinson's disease and the medication used to treat it may also affect your cognitive abilities. Regular check ups with your doctor are important as the disease progresses and symptoms become more severe.

Heart disease

If you have a heart condition that is stable and well controlled you may be fine to drive. However, for people that have a heart disease, driving can trigger an episode such as a heart attack. Always check with your doctor if you have a heart disease or believe you may have symptoms of heart disease.

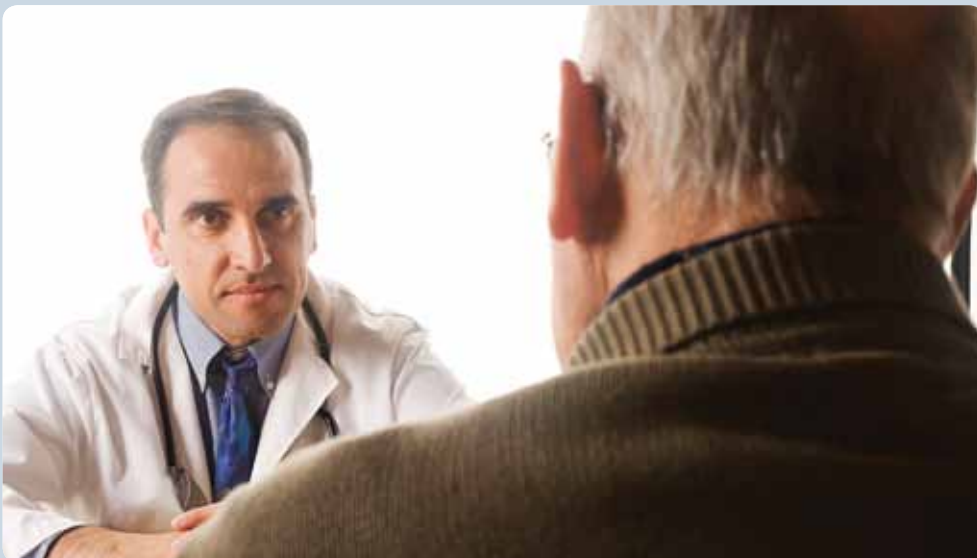
Sleep disorders

Fatigue is a major cause of road crashes and drivers with sleeping disorders are at increased crash risk. Fatigue makes you less alert to what is happening on the road and less able to react quickly and appropriately in a dangerous situation. Your doctor will determine whether your condition affects your driving and may refer you to a sleep specialist.

The most common sleep disorders among older adults are insomnia (difficulty falling asleep) and sleep apnoea (pauses in breathing during sleep).

Stroke

If you have a stroke, your doctor may recommend that you stop driving for a short time. Many stroke survivors will be able to return to normal driving upon assessment from their doctor. In some cases a stroke can cause other medical conditions and your doctor may decide that it is safer for you to have more time off the road or not to drive.



Medications

Research shows that some medicines can affect your driving ability. Alcohol in combination with medication can make the effect even worse. This can happen with prescription and non-prescription medication.

Remember that medication can affect your mental alertness and coordination and your driving may be affected. Ask your pharmacist about the effect that alcohol might have on any medicine you take.

Warning signs

Early symptoms of being affected by medication include:

- drowsiness
- dizziness
- light-headedness
- shakiness
- undue aggression
- nausea
- blurred or double vision

Medication labels

Look out for the following warning labels on medicines that indicate they may affect driving:

THIS MEDICINE MAY AFFECT MENTAL ALERTNESS AND/OR COORDINATION. IF AFFECTED, DO NOT DRIVE A MOTOR VEHICLE OR OPERATE MACHINERY.



THIS MEDICINE MAY CAUSE DROWSINESS AND MAY INCREASE THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL. IF AFFECTED DO NOT DRIVE A MOTOR VEHICLE OR OPERATE MACHINERY

Keep a list of all your medications, prescribed or not, and show it to your doctor and pharmacist each time you see them. Ask your pharmacist to update the list when you have prescriptions filled.

Questions for your pharmacist

Ask your pharmacist about the effects of each medication you take, whether prescribed or not. You may wish to ask some of the following questions:

- How and when is the best way to use this medication?
- What food, drinks, or activities should I avoid when taking this medication?
- Will this medication interact with any other I'm currently taking?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- How do I best store this medication?
- Is there anything else I should know about this medication?
- Taking this medication causes problems with my sight/strength/ swallowing/memory - what advice can you give me?

Tips for driving safely on medication

- Read your medication labels carefully and obey the directions and warnings
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if medications will affect your driving, and if they do, ask for one that doesn't
- Take public transport, a taxi or ask a friend or relative to drive if you are likely to be affected by your medication
- Take your medication exactly as directed
- Avoid driving if you feel that medication or illness are affecting your driving
- Be especially careful when starting to take a new medicine or an increased dose
- Avoid taking your medication at the same time as alcohol
- Avoid taking more than your prescribed dose
- Never use other people's medication
- If your medical condition affects your driving, avoid driving if you have missed a dose of your prescribed medication
- Don't allow your medical condition to go untreated

Licensing

From age 65

From age 65 onwards, you are only charged the photo fee when renewing your driver licence.

The requirement for older drivers (without a medical condition affecting driving) to have an annual medical assessment ceased in October 2014.

Ancillary certificate holders

If you hold an ancillary certificate, you must complete a satisfactory medical assessment each year from age 65 onwards at the higher commercial medical standards, to make sure that you are medically fit to drive.

Medically fit to drive

All drivers have a legal responsibility to report any medical condition that may affect driving. If you are concerned that a condition may be affecting your driving, you should have a discussion with your doctor.

Completing medical assessments

If you receive a request to complete a medical assessment, you should make an appointment with your doctor. You need to take the medical assessment form we send you to the appointment for the doctor to complete.

You then need to either:

- take your medical assessment to a Service Tasmania shop OR
- send your medical assessment to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles at GPO Box 1002, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001.

Remember - even if you have periodic medical assessments, you are still required by law to notify the Registrar of Motor Vehicles if you develop a medical condition or your existing medical condition changes. You can: Ring the Transport Enquiry Service on 1300 851 225 or Complete MR139 Self Notification Form.

You should also regularly assess your driving skills to ensure that you are still a safe driver - see page 4.

Your doctor will recommend whether you are:

1. **medically fit to drive**
2. **medically fit to drive – with conditions**
3. **medically fit to drive – at the private standard only**
4. **medically fit to drive – subject to passing an on-road driving assessment**
5. **medically fit to drive – subject to confirmation by a specialist**
6. **not medically fit to drive.**

What happens next?

1 Medically fit to drive OR

2 Medically fit to drive – with conditions

If your doctor decides you are medically fit to drive, you don't need to take any further action.

Sometimes your doctor may decide you are medically fit to drive but may recommend that conditions be imposed.

For example:

- you can only drive with corrective lenses
- you can only drive an automatic car
- you cannot drive at night, or
- you can drive only within a specified kilometre radius of your home (this may mean you can still drive around in your community but can no longer drive on longer trips).

If you have conditions placed on your licence, you will receive a letter confirming those conditions and will need to attend a Service Tasmania shop to get a replacement licence issued, otherwise you will not receive any further letters until your medical is next due.

3. Medically fit to drive – at the private standards only

If you hold a car, motorcycle or light rigid licence, you will be assessed at the private medical standards.

If you hold a licence to drive a medium rigid class of vehicle or higher, or you have an ancillary certificate, you will be assessed at the higher commercial medical standards.

If you're assessed as not medically fit to drive at the commercial standards, your doctor may assess you as medically fit at the private standards.

You will receive a letter from the Registrar of Motor Vehicles confirming that your licence has been downgraded to a light rigid licence, and if you had an ancillary certificate, that your ancillary certificate has been cancelled.

You then need to go to a Service Tasmania shop with your current licence and get a new licence issued at the lower class.

4. Medically fit to drive – subject to passing an on-road driving assessment

If your doctor thinks you are medically fit to drive but is not sure about your ability to drive safely, he or she may recommend that you sit an on-road driving assessment.

You will receive a letter from the Registrar of Motor Vehicles confirming a date and time for your driving assessment.

On the day of the assessment

Make sure that you:

- arrive 15 minutes before your assessment time
- have your driver licence with you
- have a suitable car available for your assessment
- have a licensed driver accompany you in case you fail your assessment.

What's involved in the driving assessment

A driving assessor will direct you where to drive and assess your vehicle control skills and your ability to make driving decisions. You will be asked to perform a turn and demonstrate a straightforward park in a shopping area. You will also be asked to merge onto and drive on the highway. Your driving assessor will score your driving performance to determine if you have passed or failed the assessment.

If you pass the driving assessment

Your driving assessor will let you know that you have passed your driving assessment.

You don't need to take any further action until your next medical is due.

If you do not pass the driving assessment

Your driving assessor will let you know that you have not passed your driving assessment.

You may:

- have conditions placed on your licence
- need to sit another driving assessment
- have your licence cancelled and be issued with a learner licence
- have your licence cancelled indefinitely

If you do fail your driving assessment, you will receive a letter from the Registrar of Motor Vehicles explaining the next steps.

5. Medically fit to drive – subject to confirmation by a specialist

Before deciding whether you are medically fit to drive, your doctor may decide to refer you for a specialist medical assessment.

You could be referred to a gerontologist, an optometrist, or to an occupational therapist for an assessment. The occupational therapist driving assessment is designed to check that you can safely cope with some of the more complex driving situations that may present a challenge for older drivers.

If the specialist report is favourable, you will not need to take any further action until your next medical is due.

The specialist may recommend that some conditions should be applied to your licence. You will receive a letter from the Registrar of Motor Vehicles confirming those conditions.

If the specialist report is unfavourable, it may be recommended that you are 'not fit to drive' (see below).

6. Not fit to drive

If your doctor recommends that, for medical reasons, it is safer for you and for others on the road if you do not drive, you will no longer be able to hold a driver licence.

You will receive a letter from the Registrar of Motor Vehicles explaining the decision to cancel or suspend your driver licence.

Any decision made by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles about your licence, such as cancelling, suspending or putting conditions on your licence, is a reviewable decision. You will always be provided with information about how to request a review of a decision made about your driving.

If you wish to you can organise your medical assessment before you receive your letter in the mail. However, your medical assessment must be dated less than 6 months ago when you return it to Service Tasmania.

Concerns about someone's driving

If you are worried about a friend or family member's ability to drive, you should first consider discussing your concerns with them directly. It may not be an easy discussion to have, but talking the issues through can help the person realise that they need to take some action.

If they don't want to discuss their driving with you, suggest that the person consult their doctor for an objective opinion.

You can notify the Registrar of Motor Vehicles expressing your concerns about someone's ability to drive by completing a Third Party Notification form available on the Transport website transport.tas.gov.au/fees_forms/

All genuine complaints made in writing will be followed up.

The form can be submitted at any Service Tasmania shop or sent to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles by :

Mail - GPO Box 1002, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001

Fax - 6233 5240

Email - driver.licensing@stategrowth.tas.gov.au



Life beyond driving

Thinking about what you'd do without a car can be uncomfortable, particularly if you are used to getting around independently. But forward planning can ease the transition – and it's never too early to start exploring your options.

It may help to talk it over with others. Friends and family may have ideas on how you can get around after driving and how they can help.

Think about the options available to you. For example, even if you decide not to drive, you could still keep your car and ask others to drive you around in it. (Check with your insurance company that other drivers are covered – those under 25 might have to be nominated and their driver licence number supplied.)



The following are some other things to think about when planning for a successful retirement from driving.

Moving house?

When deciding on a location for your next home, consider these factors:

- Are friends and family nearby?
- Are shops, library, medical services, church, recreation and other facilities within walking, short driving or public transport distance?
- Are there other people of similar age and interests in the area who could share driving to events?
- Are there good street footpaths, lighting and pedestrian crossings?
- Are bus stops in a convenient place?
- Is there a supportive community centre?

Sharing the load

If you have a spouse or partner and you suddenly had to retire from driving, would they be comfortable taking on the task? Sharing the driving now can help both of you retain your skills and confidence for as long as possible.

Ask friends and family about whether they would like to share the driving and see if they have any ideas about other transport options.

Retiring from driving is a change, not an end. With support from others and some forward planning, you can still get about in your community and do the things you want to do.

Home delivery services

These days many major supermarkets and department stores offer online or over the phone shopping.

You can order your groceries online and have them delivered to your home, so you don't have to carry heavy groceries or use public transport to do your shopping.

Supermarkets also offer home delivery, so you can go to the store and do your grocery shopping, and then organise for the groceries to be delivered to your home.

Keeping moving – by public transport

For people who are fortunate enough to live near a bus route, a supply of bus timetables, and some good maps are essential tools for life after driving. Consider different travel options for each trip. For example, you could take the bus to your local club and then catch a taxi home if the bus timetables aren't convenient.

When booking appointments, try to arrange a time that fits in with public transport timetables.

Bus service contact details:

- Metro (Hobart, Launceston and Burnie) — telephone 132201 or internet www.metrotas.com.au
- Merseylink (Devonport area) — telephone 1300 367 590
- Redline Coaches (Statewide) — telephone 1300 360 000
- Tassielink Coaches (Statewide) — telephone 1300 300 520
- O'Driscoll Coaches (Derwent Valley) — telephone 6249 8880

Ask if you are entitled to a concession fare if you hold a pensioner concession card, Healthcare Card or Seniors Card.



Keeping moving – on foot

Walking is a very healthy alternative to driving at any time of life. Walking keeps you fit, and it's a good way of contributing to a cleaner environment. By not using your car, you're helping to improve air quality and also saving money on petrol!

Stepping up the amount of walking you do can make you fitter, and that in itself can prolong your driving career. To begin with, consider making short trips on foot instead of taking the car. If you'd like to walk regularly, joining a local walking group can provide motivation and good company. Contact your local council for more information.

Stay safe while walking

- If no controlled crossing points are available, cross the road using the shortest possible route and keep looking for vehicles. If there is a pedestrian refuge or traffic island in the middle of the road, use it to cross halfway, then take the time to stop and look for traffic from the left.
- If there isn't a traffic island, allow yourself plenty of time to get across both lanes to avoid being stranded in the middle. Try to make eye contact with drivers, particularly those turning, before you cross.
- If possible, plan walking trips to avoid peak traffic times.
- If you are visiting a number of shops, plan your route to minimise the need to cross back and forth across the road.
- Wear light coloured clothing or carry a brightly coloured bag to ensure you're easily seen by motorists and cyclists. If you are out at night or walking in poor light conditions, consider wearing reflective armbands or clothing, and use a torch.
- Remember to wear your glasses or your hearing aid if you need them.

Keeping moving – by bike

Biking is an enjoyable way of getting about, keeping fit and doing your bit for the environment.

Contact your local council in the first instance for cycling information and advice. Many councils actively encourage cycling and provide cycling facilities and route maps – they can also put you in touch with local cycling groups in your area. See page 36 for local council contacts.

Cycling safely is important – wear light, bright clothing and/or clothing with reflective tape, remember to keep left, use cycle lanes where provided and always wear your safety helmet.

Remember that if you're cycling on the road you must obey road laws and be aware of other road users.

Many cycle paths are shared by pedestrians, so whether you're walking or biking, please be considerate to other users.



Keeping moving – by mobility scooter

Electric powered mobility scooters are becoming increasingly popular as an alternative to driving. For that trip to the shops – which are just too far away to walk – a mobility scooter can easily get you there.

Although convenient, mobility scooters do come with responsibilities. You are legally required to use them on the footpath where one is readily accessible. You also need to be considerate and drive at a speed that doesn't put other footpath users at risk.

If the scooter's maximum speed is 10 km/h or less, you won't need a driver licence to operate it.

For more information on how to use mobility scooters safely, see the *Motorised Mobility Devices* booklet produced by the Independent Living Centre, see Useful contacts on page 36.



Finding out about alternative transport schemes

Taxis

Taxis are generally more expensive than other forms of public transport, but they will take you directly where you want to go. It may work out cheaper than running and maintaining a vehicle.

Remember, car ownership can be expensive. The cost of running an older, small car can be somewhere in the region of \$1,800 to \$2,500 per year, not counting the value of the car itself and its depreciation. That's a lot of taxi fares!

Some taxi services have wheelchair accessible taxis available.

Concessions on taxi fares are available for anyone who has been assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria for the Transport Access Scheme (for people with a severe and permanent disability).

Members of the Transport Access Scheme are also entitled to parking concessions and driver licensing and vehicle registration concessions. Contact the Transport Enquiry Service on 1300 851 225 for more information, or visit www.transport.tas.gov.au

Community Transport

Community Transport Services Tasmania provide social and non emergency medical transport to the frail aged and younger disabled people — phone 6231 6974 for bookings and enquiries.

The Patient Travel Assistance Scheme provides financial assistance with travel and/or accommodation costs to Tasmanian residents who need to travel for certain medical treatments. Contact 6233 3252 for more information on this service.

Useful contacts

Community Transport Services Tasmania Inc (03) 6231 6974
www.ctst.org.au

Carelink 1800 052 222

Carelink Centres provide a single point of contact for information on community, aged and disability services and carer support.

Council of the Ageing (COTA) (03) 6231 3265

COTA Tasmania is the primary organisation representing the rights of older Tasmanians.

Independent Living Centre (Tas) Inc. 1300 885 886

The Independent Living Centre is a charitable non-profit community organisation that provides advice and information about assistive technology.

Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania (03) 6232 7133

The Seniors Bureau promote positive ageing, provide advice on issues that affect the quality of life of older Tasmanians and support older people's participation in developing policy. They can provide information on topics such as Seniors Week and Seniors Cards.

Local Councils

Break O'Day	(03) 6376 7900	Huon Valley	(03) 6264 0300
Brighton	(03) 6268 7000	Kentish	(03) 6491 2500
Burnie	(03) 6430 5700	Kingborough	(03) 6211 8200
Central Coast	(03) 6429 8900	King Island	(03) 6462 9000
Central Highlands	(03) 6286 3202	Latrobe	(03) 6421 4650
Circular Head	(03) 6452 4800	Launceston	(03) 6323 3000
Clarence	(03) 6245 8600	Meander Valley	(03) 6393 5300
Derwent Valley	(03) 6261 8500	Northern Midlands	(03) 6397 7303
Devonport	(03) 6424 0511	Sorell	(03) 6269 0000
Dorset	(03) 6352 6500	Southern Midlands	(03) 6254 5000
Flinders	(03) 6359 5001	Tasman	(03) 6250 9200
George Town	(03) 6382 8800	Waratah-Wynyard	(03) 6443 8333
Glamorgan Spring Bay	(03) 6256 4777	West Coast	(03) 6471 4700
Glenorchy	(03) 6216 6700	West Tamar	(03) 6383 6350
Hobart	(03) 6238 2711		

You can access all local council websites via www.service.tas.gov.au.

Service Tasmania shops

Telephone: 1300 135 513

Web: www.service.tas.gov.au

Beaconsfield	West Tamar Council Chamber, West Street
Bridgewater	28 Green Point Road
Burnie	48 Cattley Street
Campbell Town	Town Hall, Main Road
Currie (King Island)	15 George Street
Deloraine	8 Emu Bay Road
Devonport	21 Oldaker Street
George Town	16-18 Anne Street
Glenorchy	4 Terry Street
Hobart	134 Macquarie Street
Huonville	1 Skinner Drive
Kingston	Shop 87A, Channel Court Shopping Centre
Launceston	1 Civic Square
Longford	9 Wellington Street
New Norfolk	14 Bathurst
Oatlands	71 High Street
Queenstown	9-13 Driffield Street
Rosny	Library, Bligh Street
Scottsdale	3 Ellenor Street
Sheffield	64 High Street
Smithton	130 Nelson Street
Sorell Shop	3, 5 Fitzroy Street
St Helens	65 Cecilia Street
Triabunna	17 Vicary Street
Ulverstone	54-56 King Edward Street
Whitemark (Flinders Island)	Lagoon Road
Wynyard	72 Goldie Street



CONTACT DETAILS

Department of State Growth

GPO Box 1002

Hobart 7001

Transport Enquiry Service:

Phone 1300 851 225

Web:

www.transport.tas.gov.au