

Your Health and Driving Safely



Could Your Medical Condition Cause a Collision?

Did you know that Massachusetts is a self reporting state? That means it is **your** responsibility to report to the Registry of Motor Vehicles any medical condition that may affect your ability to drive. The purpose of this brochure is to help drivers identify some medical conditions that can lead to impaired driving. The RMV consulted with medical experts before developing regulations about minimum physical abilities necessary for driving, and these regulations apply to **all** licensed drivers and new applicants. Other standards may apply to commercial drivers.

Arthritis

Arthritis can make it difficult to perform physical activities. Even the simple ones required for driving such as turning your head and neck to check for traffic, reaching the brake pedal quickly in an emergency, and adjusting rear and side mirrors. If you're not sure about whether you can move fast enough in an emergency, see your doctor and consider having a driving evaluation at an outpatient rehabilitation center.

Vision

One of the most important requirements for safe driving is good vision. For an unrestricted license, you must have at least 20/40 vision in one eye (even with glasses) and 120 degrees peripheral vision. If you have 20/50, 20/60, or 20/70 vision and 120 degrees peripheral vision, you can still obtain a driver's license that allows you to drive during the day. If you wear a telescopic lens, special rules may apply.



Hearing

Hearing loss, by itself, does not impair a person's ability to drive. If your family members or doctor tell you that they've noticed a change in your hearing it's important to take note of these warnings. Check with your doctor about any concerns you might have.



Loss of Consciousness

Many medical conditions can cause a person to lose consciousness or "pass out" without warning. Heart conditions, breathing problems, diabetes, seizure disorders and sleep disturbances can affect mental alertness. If you've suffered a loss of consciousness or an episode of altered consciousness (such as low blood sugar, lightheadedness, or disorientation) you **MUST** turn in your driver's license for at least six (6)

months. The RMV will provide you with a free Mass I.D. to use during that time. If, after six (6) months, your doctor certifies that you have been episode free, you can regain your driving privileges. The RMV will provide you with a new license free of charge.

Mental Abilities

Several medical conditions can affect mental alertness and clear thinking without causing the driver to "pass out." Trouble remembering things, confusion, stress, depression and anxiety are all conditions that can affect your ability to drive. Many conditions are temporary and you may only have to refrain from driving during a brief adjustment period.



Drugs and Alcohol

Some prescription medications can cause serious side effects (for example, drowsiness). Massachusetts's law forbids driving while under the influence of narcotic drugs, even with a valid prescription. Always check with your doctor before driving. Prescription medicine may also worsen the effects of alcohol. Also, elderly drivers may find that alcohol affects them more now than it did in their youth. Never drink and drive.



Where Can I Find Out More?

MassDOT/RMV Medical Affairs Bureau
P.O. Box 55889
Boston, MA 02205-5889.
Website: www.mass.gov/rmv
Phone: (617) 351-9222

Deval L. Patrick, Governor
Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor
Richard Davey, Secretary of Transportation
Rachel Kaprielian, Registrar

Driving Evaluation Programs

Berkshire Medical Center
725 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 447-2200

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
DriveWise Program
300 Brookline Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 667-4074

Beverly Hospital Hunt Center
75 Lindall Street
Danvers, MA 01923
(978) 774-4400 x4050

Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital
250 Pond Street
Braintree, MA 02184
(781) 348-4017

Driving Solutions
8 Marshall Street
N. Reading, MA 01864
(508) 878 9583

Emerson Hospital Center for Sports
Rehab
and Specialty Services
57 ORNAC, Unit 1B
Concord, MA 01742
(978) 287-8200

Fairlawn Rehabilitation Hospital
189 May Street
Worcester, MA 01602
(508) 791-6351

New England Rehabilitation Hospital
2 Rehabilitation Way
Woburn, MA 01801
(781) 935-5050

Newton-Wellesley Hospital
2014 Washington Street
Newton, MA 02462
(617) 253-0753

Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital
70 Butler Street
Salem, NH 03079
(603) 893-2900

Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital
125 Nashua Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 573-7000

Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital
Cape Cod, 311 Service Road
East Sandwich, MA 02537
(508) 833-4141 Sandwich
(508) 240-7203 Orleans

Sturdy Memorial Hospital
211 Park Street
Attleboro, MA 02703
(508) 236-7380

VA New England Healthcare System
940 Belmont Avenue
Brockton, MA 02310
(508) 583-4500

Weldon Center for Rehabilitation
233 Carew Street
Springfield, MA 01104
(413) 748-6800

Mature Driver Training Programs

AAA
Safe Driving for Mature Operators
Call your local AAA for information

AARP Driver Safety Program
(888) 687-2277

Central Massachusetts Safety Council
West Boylston, MA
(508) 835-2333 x23

Safety Council of Western N.E.
1000 Wilbraham Road
Springfield, MA 01109
(413) 783-1632

In Control Advanced Driver Training
188 Main Street, Suite 202
Wilmington, MA 01887
(978) 658-4144