



Information for Patients

FITNESS TO DRIVE



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Are you Fit to drive?

Driving is a complex task that requires constant attention and concentration. Many sleep-disorders cause excessive daytime sleepiness, which significantly increases the risk of motor vehicle accidents.

Approximately 10% of motor vehicle accidents are attributable to driver fatigue, tiredness, or falling asleep at the wheel.

A person with obstructive sleep apnoea is roughly seven times more likely to have a car accident.

If you suspect that you have a sleep-disorder or you feel that you are tired or drowsy when driving, it is very important to discuss the issue with your General Practitioner, who may wish to refer you for an overnight sleep study or to a Sleep Specialist. Correct treatment can then be implemented, reducing associated driving risks.

If you are currently being treated for a sleep-disorder (such as with CPAP treatment for obstructive sleep apnoea), it is essential to keep your treatment up-to-date and to have regular check-ups (preferably once per year) with your General Practitioner or Sleep Physician to ensure that it is safe for you to continue driving.

If you are suffering from tiredness or sleepiness when driving, you should discuss the matter with your General Practitioner, who may refer you for further assessment or treatment.

Tips for driving:

- Never drive if you are feeling drowsy, tired, sleepy or fatigued
- Share the driving with other people in the car when possible
- Take a 5-10 minute break every 2 hours when travelling long distances
- Avoid using the heater when driving – keeping the inside of your car cool will help fight drowsiness
- Avoid heavy meals when driving – this tends to keep your blood sugar level down
- Do not use cruise control, so you can slow down or speed up when necessary
- Avoid staring at oncoming head-lights when driving at night.

If you are a commercial driver and you have a medical condition, you may require medical clearance to drive. It is important that you discuss this with your doctor.

Austrroads Guidelines

Information on driving requirements is available from the National Transit Commission website. You must check with your local driving authority what regulations are in place in your area in regard to sleepiness and driving:

- Queensland Transport
- New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority
- Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Road Transport
- Vic Roads (Victorian Driving Authority)
- Tasmania Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources – Transport