

Getting Back to Driving After a Stroke in Ontario

A stroke can affect your ability to drive safely. In Ontario, there are steps you must take before returning to driving. This is meant to help stroke survivors and their supporters.

1. Medical Reporting and Driving Suspension

- Physicians and nurse practitioners are legally required to report certain medical conditions, including stroke, to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO). This is nothing against you personally; this is a legal requirement.
- After a stroke, your driver's licence may be temporarily suspended while your medical condition is assessed and while you are recovering.
- Sometimes, your doctor may have not reported your condition however, as a licensed driver it is still your role to take responsibility for your change in your medical status which means ensuring your safety and fitness to drive.

2. Medical Assessment and Recovery

- After you have taken enough time to recover and become medically stable, then the next steps can occur.
- MTO may have sent you forms to take to your doctor – your doctor may not want to fill them out until you are more medically stable
- You will need a medical evaluation to determine if you are stable enough from your medical condition(s). This firstly, is having your doctor fill out a form or attending for a functional occupational therapy driving assessment.
- Recovery time varies. Some people recover within a few weeks or a few months, while others may take longer.
- Your doctor may refer you to an occupational therapist or specialist for further testing or therapy to help with your recovery. You can also call, without a referral, to an Occupational therapist, physiotherapist or speech language pathologist to get therapy to assist with your recovery.

3. Functional Driving Assessment – the goal is safe driving

- If your doctor believes you are medically stable, they may suggest are ready to have a specialized driving assessment.
- The MTO may require you to have this functional driving assessment that is completed by an Occupational Therapist (OT) and specialized licensed driving instructor
- If your licence is suspended, the assessment centre will arrange a special permit from MTO that allows the assessment to be done on a specific date
- The occupational therapy driving assessment includes:
 - A clinical evaluation (testing vision, cognitive skills, and motor function) to see what effects are remaining from your stroke

- An on-road test with the trained evaluators to determine if your stroke is affecting your ability to drive, if you need any adaptive driving equipment to help you compensate for your stroke effects
- These assessments are done only at approved driver assessment centres (visit the website for a location closest to you) and the fee is not covered by OHIP. The fee ranges from \$700 - \$900, no tax and is tax deductible because this is a medical service.
- The findings from this assessment may include (1) that you are fit to return to driving, (2) you need driver rehab to learn to compensate for issues related to the stroke because they are affecting your driving skills or (3) you are not yet ready to return to driving because the stroke effects are too significant. Having more rehab and recovery time may be helpful.

4. Submitting the Findings to MTO

- MTO will review all reports that they have received to decide if your licence can be reinstated.

5. Driving Rehabilitation (If Needed)

- If you have minor difficulties, you may benefit from driving rehabilitation to help you adapt. The functional driving assessment will determine this and make this a part of their recommendation.
- Rehabilitation may include training with adaptive equipment or strategies to improve driving safety.

6. Receiving MTO's Decision

- MTO will notify you by mail or via their portal if your licence is reinstated or if further steps are needed.
- If your licence is reinstated, you can resume driving.
- If your application is denied, you may have the option to appeal the decision.

Resources & Support

- **Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO):** www.ontario.ca/page/driving-medical-condition - you can find a listing of all approved functional driving assessment centres across Ontario
- **Ontario Stroke Network:** www.ontariostrokenetwork.ca
- **Occupational Therapy Services:** Contact a community provider or ask your healthcare provider for a referral if you feel you need more recovery before you can return to driving
- **Skill Builders Driver Assessment & Training program:** www.skillbuildersrehab.com/driving Visit the website to fill out an intake form, get a physician referral form and to request an appointment. You can also call to the driver rehab intake coordinator at 705-727-0319 or email to appt@skillbuildersrehab.com

Note: Every stroke is different. Always follow your health care providers' recommendations regarding driving readiness. Safety is the top priority.

For more information: Speak with your healthcare providers

MTO: telephone 416-235- 1773 or 1-800-268-1481 or email to rivermedicalreview@ontario.ca