

Driving and Diabetes

Living Well with Your Health Conditions

Diabetes is a progressive condition that can affect a person's ability to drive safely.

Insulin and oral medications used to treat diabetes can cause low blood glucose, which may result in a sudden loss of consciousness or changes in consciousness. As well, the long term complications of diabetes may result in vision changes, heart disease, nervous system disease, and others, all of which can affect driving fitness.

In many cases, diabetes does not impact a person's fitness to drive. However, as each person is affected differently by diabetes, it is important that each person monitor their own fitness to drive and take action when needed.

Suggestions to Stay Safe While Driving

1. Take an active role in monitoring your ability to drive by checking your blood glucose with an accurate meter and keeping a record/log of your results to review with your doctor and care team.
2. Learn about hypoglycemia (low blood glucose), when it may happen, how it may feel, how to treat it, and how to prevent it from happening. *Do your best to keep your blood glucoses within target levels.*
3. **Think safety!** Check your blood glucose immediately before and at least every 4 hours during long drives. Carry a meter and some fast-acting carbohydrate within easy reach in your car (e.g., attached to the visor).
4. Never start to drive if your blood glucose is less than 4.0 mmol/L¹ or if you have any signs of hypoglycemia. You need to treat your hypoglycemia first. You must wait 45 – 60 minutes after you treat hypoglycemia before you drive.
5. If your blood glucose is between 4.0 and 5.0 mmol/L, eat a snack containing carbohydrate before you start to drive.

¹ See note on next page if you have a Commercial Driver's License (class 1 – 4).

6. If you are driving and think your blood glucose may be going low, **stop-and-treat** immediately. You need to treat your hypoglycemia and then wait 45 – 60 minutes before you start to drive. Your blood glucose must be above 5.0 mmol/L before you go back to driving. **Think: Be “5” to “drive!”**
7. Your degree of risk of driving with diabetes depends on many things. If the following apply to you, it is particularly important that you check your blood glucose before you start to drive and at regular intervals when you are driving. You are at higher risk if you:
 - Have experienced many low blood glucoses or at least one seriously low blood glucose in the past year; or
 - Don't “feel” a low blood glucose when it is happening to you; or
 - Have had a significant drop in your A1C or your A1C is within the normal range (good blood glucose control can put you at risk for low blood glucose).
8. When you apply for a driver's license or renewal of an existing license, the application form will ask questions about your medical and physical fitness. You must disclose on the form that you have a disease which may interfere with the safe operation of a motor vehicle. If you do not disclose this, your insurance may not be valid if you are in an accident. This disclosure will not affect the amount you pay for your insurance.

For Class 1-4 commercial driver's licenses, blood glucose targets will be looked at on an individual bases. In many cases you will be told not to drive if your blood glucose is less than 6.0 mmol/L. Fact Sheet, Drivers with Diabetes (Class 1 – 4 License), Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles, March 2003
<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/publications/index.htm>

Further Information

Diabetes and Driving, Canadian Diabetes Association,
http://www.diabetes.ca/section_advocacy/diabetes_driving.asp

Canadian Journal of Diabetes Care. Canadian Diabetes Association's Clinical Practice Guidelines for Diabetes and Private and Commercial Driving. 2003. 27(2); 128-140.