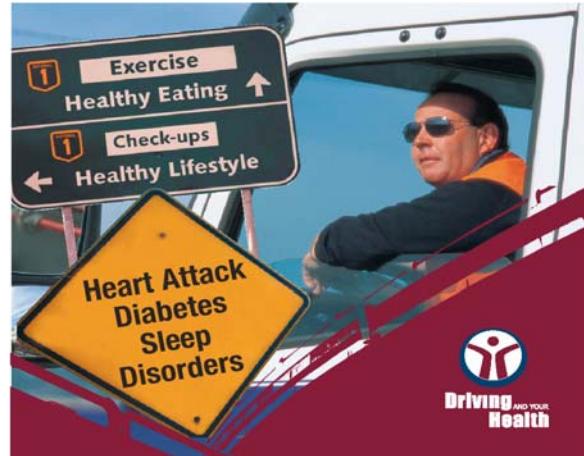


Driving and your health - Think about it!



Fact Sheet No.1: Revised Medical Standards for Commercial Vehicle Drivers



1. Commercial driving - why is your health important?

You spend a lot of time on the road - its demanding work and you can be responsible for heavy loads, passengers or dangerous goods. Your health is therefore important for your own safety as well as public safety. The revised national medical standards (*Assessing Fitness to Drive*, 2003) are there to ensure road safety.

2. What type of health problems might affect your fitness to drive?

A number of health problems could affect your ability to perform your work safely. Some of these include:

- heart disease;
- diabetes;
- sleep disorders;
- epilepsy;
- blackouts and fainting;
- psychiatric disorders;
- vision problems; and
- age-related decline.

Sleep disorders for example are common and have been found to increase the rate of crashes by seven fold. The effect on driving of these disorders is similar to that seen when a person is over 0.05.

The good news is that most of these conditions can be effectively treated so that you can continue to drive. The important thing is to seek medical advice early about health problems so that they can be effectively managed.

It is important that you tell your doctor that you are a commercial vehicle driver.

3. What are your legal responsibilities?

Road safety law (except in Western Australia) requires all drivers to report to the Driver Licensing Authority any permanent or long-term illness that is likely to affect their ability to drive safely.

You also have a *duty of care* to yourself, the public and fellow workers. Therefore you must tell your employer if you have a health problem that is affecting your ability to drive safely. You do not need to tell your employer the details of your health condition.

4. What is a ‘Conditional Licence’ and how will it affect my work?

A *conditional licence* enables a person to continue to drive as long as certain “conditions” or restrictions are met AND as long as they aren’t creating an increased safety risk. “Conditions” may include seeing your doctor or **medical specialist** more regularly for a check-up. These check-ups are to ensure your illness is well managed so that you can drive safely.

For commercial vehicle drivers a conditional licence may only be issued on the recommendation of a medical specialist, as distinct from a GP.

Holding a conditional licence should not affect your employment status as a driver, provided there are no restrictions that affect your job tasks.

5. Will your doctor notify the Licensing Authority if you are not fit to drive?

The relationship between you and your doctor is confidential, so your doctor will not normally communicate directly with the Driver Licensing Authority or your employer. They will provide you with advice about your ability to drive as well as a letter or report to take to the authority and your employer.

(Note: Doctors in South Australia and the Northern Territory are required to report directly to the Driver Licensing Authority).

It is your responsibility to report your health condition to the Driver Licensing Authority and your employer.

**For more information see
www.ntc.gov.au**

6. What happens if you don’t follow your doctor’s advice?



If you continue to drive despite your doctor’s advice and you do not report to the Driver Licensing Authority or to your employer, you are not fulfilling your legal responsibility. If you have a crash under these circumstances you may be prosecuted and your insurance will not be valid.

If your doctor is aware that you are continuing to drive and feels that your driving is a serious risk to you and other road users, he or she may feel obliged to report directly to the Driver Licensing Authority. Your employer may also do the same.

7. For more information

For information about driving and your health speak to your local doctor. The person at your workplace responsible for health and safety matters will also be able to help - ask them about the ‘Driving and Your Health Tool Box Talk’ series.

Further information is also available from your local Driver Licensing Authority and the NTC and Austroads websites:

www.ntc.gov.au

www.austroads.com.au

The useful contacts below are also sources of general health information and support – helping you to maintain good health and to keep you on the road.

LIFELINE 24hr crisis support 13 11 14	DIABETES AUSTRALIA 9am-5pm weekdays 1300 13 65 88	CANCER HELPLINE 8.30am-5.30pm weekdays 13 11 20	HEARTLINE 9am-5pm weekdays 1300 36 27 87
QUITLINE 8am-8pm Quit smoking advice 131 848	SANE 9am-5pm weekdays support, referral and information on mental health & illness 1800 688 382	MENSLINE 24hr support and information service for men regarding family, relationships 1300 78 99 78	AMBULANCE FIRE & POLICE 000

State/Territory Services

Refer to local listing in Yellow Pages (usually located in the front of the book) for:

- Crisis & Counseling help lines
- Drug & Alcohol helpline
- Nutrition Australia
- Suicide helpline
- Gamblers helpline
- Parent helpline

Looking after your health is like looking after your vehicle - regular care and maintenance pays off in the long run

The Driving and Your Health Campaign is supported by: