

DRIVING AND TRANSPORT AFTER STROKE

This fact sheet is about driving and transport options after a stroke or TIA. A TIA (Transient Ischaemic Attack) is sometimes called a mini-stroke or warning stroke.



You cannot drive for at least 4 weeks after a stroke and at least 2 weeks after a single TIA.

While your physical driver licence will not be taken away after a stroke or TIA, you may be issued with a fine if you choose to drive against the legal requirements. It is also likely to void your insurance if you have an accident.

WHY CAN'T I DRIVE IMMEDIATELY AFTER HAVING A STROKE OR TIA?

Getting back behind the wheel is usually a priority for a driver who has had a stroke or a TIA. However, you cannot drive for at least 4 weeks after a stroke and at least 2 weeks after a single TIA. This initial stand down period is due to the risk of:

- having another stroke or TIA
- having a seizure
- experiencing other neurological problems

As long as your health professional agrees it is safe, after the stand-down period you may be able to drive again.

HOW STROKE MAY AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE

You make hundreds of decisions while driving, even if you're only going a short distance. After a stroke, your ability to make these decisions and drive safely can be affected in various ways. You may have physical or visual problems, or you may have difficulty concentrating for long periods of time or with making quick decisions.

Physical effects: weakness in your arm, leg or both is common after stroke. Other physical effects may include pain, changes in sensation, paralysis and muscle spasms.

Problems with sight: a stroke can cause a variety

of problems with your sight. These include double or blurred vision, loss of central vision in one or both eyes, and loss to your range of vision.

Cognitive effects: driving requires many different cognitive skills. You must concentrate, navigate, multitask and make quick decisions. After a stroke, you may have difficulty concentrating, understanding, solving problems, or making decisions. Your perception of space

and distance may have changed, or you may have problems with your memory.

Fatigue: after a stroke, you may find that you lack energy and feel extremely tired. This may affect your ability to drive.

Epilepsy: a small number of people have a seizure within the first 24 hours of their stroke, and some go on to develop epilepsy. This condition can affect your ability to drive.

LEGAL GUIDELINES ABOUT DRIVING AFTER STROKE IN NEW ZEALAND

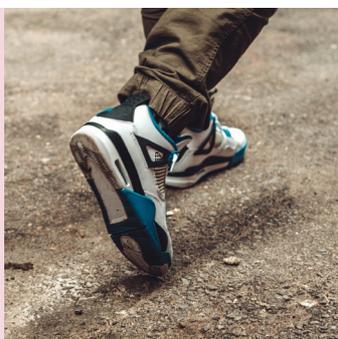
NZ TRANSPORT AUTHORITY SUMMARY REGARDING LEGAL GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING TO DRIVING

MEDICAL CONDITION	TYPE OF LICENCE: CARS AND MOTORCYCLES (class 1 or class 6 licence and/or a D, F, R, T or W endorsement)	TYPE OF LICENCE: HEAVY VEHICLES (class 2, 3, 4 or 5 licence and/or a P, V, I or O endorsement)
STROKE	Generally unfit to drive. May be fit to drive after 4 weeks, and only once clinical recovery is completed and no significant residual disability present.	Generally unfit to drive. May be fit to drive after 3 months following an ischaemic stroke, subject to certain criteria. May be fit to drive after 12 months following a haemorrhagic stroke, subject to certain criteria.
TIA (Transient Ischaemic Attack)	For a single event, generally fit to drive after 2 weeks.	For a single event, generally fit to drive after 4 weeks.
EPILEPSY AFTER STROKE	Shouldn't drive for 12 months. Fit to drive after 6 months, with a supporting neurologist opinion.	Generally unfit to drive. Fitness to drive may be reconsidered if the patient is seizure-free for a minimum of 5 years without medication, and a neurologist opinion supports the application. Consideration may also be given to patients who are stable for 10 years on medication.

NZ Transport Authority Waka Kotahi can provide further information about returning to drive. You can call them free on **0800 822 422**.

WALKING

Even when you are driving again, it's good to continue walking regularly for exercise and so you get fresh air and sunshine. As you increase your walking time, you may be able to walk to your neighbours, to the shops, to parks, to the bus stop, and to other activities in your community.



You may also be eligible for a subsidy or grant

ADAPTATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS TO YOUR CAR FOR DRIVING

Even if you have physical disabilities following your stroke, it may be possible for you to drive. There are various vehicle adaptations and motoring accessories that can make driving possible and more comfortable. For more information, visit the Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand website.

RECOVERY, REHABILITATION AND RETURNING TO DRIVE

Each person is affected by stroke in a different way. Some people can return to driving after a few weeks and others will take much longer. You may require a driving assessment to assess your ability to drive safely.

For people who are home again soon after their stroke or TIA: Your GP or another health professional involved in your care will advise if it is safe for you to drive after the stand-down period. You may need further rehabilitation and a specialist driving assessment before you are able to drive again. Your health professional will refer you to a specialist occupational therapist (OT) for assessment if required.

For people who have extensive medical treatment and a significant time in rehabilitation after their stroke or TIA: Due to the demands of driving, it is suggested you wait about six months before adding driving to your rehabilitation goals. Rehabilitation team members



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will support and advise you about this. You may need a driving assessment prior to being given the all-clear to drive.

OTs carry out these assessments. Your health professional will advise you or you can phone Occupational Therapy New Zealand (OTNZ) on **04 473 6510** for assistance.

TRANSPORT OPTIONS WHILE YOU ARE WAITING TO DRIVE AGAIN OR IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO DRIVE

If you are unable to drive, you may feel that you have lost your independence and have to rely on others to get out and about. This is particularly hard if you live in a rural area or in places where public transport is limited. Talk to your family /

whānau, friends, and social support services about how you are feeling. They can help you to look at other options that will help you do things that are important to you, such as seeing friends and taking part in hobbies and community activities.

SERVICES WHICH MAY BE AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA

Mobility Parking Permit Scheme

With a Mobility Parking Permit (a card you put in the window of your car), you can use mobility car parks provided by councils, hospitals, supermarkets and other organisations. Most councils offer additional discounts on standard car parks. The permit is registered to an individual and can only be used when the permit holder is using the vehicle. It can be used in different vehicles and by different drivers, so long as the vehicle is being used by the permit holder. For further details and help, you can phone CCS Disability Action on **0800 227 2255**.



SERVICES WHICH MAY BE AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA CONTINUED

Total Mobility Scheme (TMS)

The Total Mobility Scheme is a subsidised taxi service. It works using vouchers or electronic cards that give a discount on normal taxi fares, up to a specified level. The purpose of the scheme is to assist eligible people with impairments to access appropriate transport to enhance their community participation.

Many local providers are contracted to carry out TMS assessment and register clients for TMS. Please call us on 0800 STROKE (**0800 78 76 53**) to find out who in your area can do a TMS assessment.

Mobility Scooters And Battery-Powered Wheelchairs

Mobility scooters and battery-powered wheelchairs may be a good solution for staying mobile and independent. It is recommended that you get expert advice from an OT and trial a scooter or wheelchair before hiring or purchasing. Your GP will advise you about your local OTs or you can phone OTNZ on **04 473 6510**.

option is to contact your regional or local council or Citizens Advice Bureau (**0800 367 222**) to find out what public transport is available.

Other useful numbers are: Auckland Transport **09 366 6400**; Metlink (Wellington public transport) **0800 801 700**; Firstport (can give information about travel throughout NZ) **0800 171 981**.

You can visit the Stroke Aotearoa website for more information on mobility scooters and battery-powered wheelchairs.



➔ Call **0800 78 76 53** or email **help@stroke.org.nz** for free support and guidance.

- ➔ In some areas, there are volunteer drivers who will take you to appointments or on outings.

Public Transport

Public transport may be an option for you. Public transport providers have an obligation to provide transport which is easily accessible for people with disabilities. Services in each area vary. The best

Other Transport and Driving Services

Most larger hospitals provide a shuttle service to get to hospital appointments, and in some areas, there are volunteer drivers who will take you to appointments or on outings. There are also private companies that provide driving and personal services. You are usually able to use your TMS cards with these companies – check when you are booking. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can give you more information on these options (**0800 367 222**).

About Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand

Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand is the national charity dedicated to stroke prevention and improving outcomes for stroke survivors and their whānau. The generosity of individuals allows us to provide every aspect of our life-changing services.

If you want to find out more about donating or fundraising to help protect the lives of people living in your community, please call **0800 45 99 54** or email **fundraising@stroke.org.nz**.

