

This 2-page fact sheet is about driving after a stroke or a TIA. TIA is also known as Transient Ischaemic Attack, mini-stroke or warning stroke.



### Why can't I drive immediately after having a stroke or TIA?

Getting back behind the wheel to drive is usually a priority for a driver who has had a stroke or a TIA. **However after stroke or TIA you cannot drive for one month.** This initial stand down period is not based on the effects of your stroke but due to the risk of you:

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

After one month you may be able to drive again, as long as your doctor agrees it is safe for you to do so.

### 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
<b>Stroke</b>	Should not drive until clinical recovery is complete with no significant residual disability likely to compromise safety. <b>This should not be less than one month.</b>	Should not drive. Under some circumstances, the Agency may consider requests to resume driving from current licence holders.
<b>TIA Transient Ischaemic Attack</b>	<b>Should not drive for at least one month for a single TIA.</b> Individuals with multiple TIAs may return to driving after three months provided the condition has been adequately investigated and treated.	Should not drive for at least six months for a single TIA. Individuals who have multiple TIAs should not drive. However, the Agency may consider granting a licence where sound reasons to do so exist.
<b>Epilepsy after stroke</b>	<b>Should not drive for 12 months.</b> This may be reduced to a minimum of six months by The Agency subject to a supporting neurologist report.	Should not drive. However, the Agency may consider granting a licence to individuals who have been seizure free for five years and are not on any medication to control seizures.
<p><b>NZ Transport Authority can provide further information about returning to drive. Their centre is open Monday to Friday, 8am–6pm. Freephone number 0800 822 422.</b></p>		



## How stroke may affect your ability to drive

**During 60 minutes driving you make 70,000 decisions.** 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. This section explains this in more detail.

**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 visual field loss.

**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 your 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.



## Recovery, rehabilitation and returning to drive

**Each person is affected by stroke in a different way. Some people can return to driving after a month and other people 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 will advise if it is safe for you to drive after one month. You may need further rehabilitation and a specialist driving assessment before you are able to drive again. Your GP or consultant will refer you to a specialist occupational therapist (OT) for assessment.

**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's suggested you wait about 6 months before adding driving to your rehabilitation goals. Rehabilitation team members will support and advise you about this. You will probably need to have a driving assessment prior to being given the all clear to drive.

OTs carry out these assessments. Your GP or consultant will advise you or you can phone OT New Zealand on 04 473 6510 for assistance.

This Fact Sheet was prepared by the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand with support from Jane Gray, Occupational Therapist, Burwood Driving and Vehicle Assessment Service, Christchurch. August 2016.