

Am I still fit to drive?

Retiring from driving

VicRoads understands the important role driving plays in keeping people connected and independent. We want people to be independent drivers for as long as they are safe. Having a medical condition does not mean a person is ineligible to hold a licence.

Eventually we will all need to stop driving. The ideal approach to retiring from driving is to gradually transition from regular driving, to using alternative transport options.

If you have concerns about someone's driving, you need to talk to them about it. Equally, if someone speaks to you about your driving, you need to listen and reflect on your own driving.

All drivers, no matter what age, should routinely consider 'am I still fit to drive?'



Many of us drive every day without thinking about the risks that come with being behind the wheel. All of us need to make sure we are fit to drive, or we risk harming ourselves and others.

If you have a serious, permanent or long-term illness, disability, medical condition or injury, or an existing condition that deteriorates, you must:

- talk to a doctor about how it might affect your driving
- contact VicRoads to report your condition
- send VicRoads a medical report from a doctor who knows your medical history.

The road ahead: alternatives to driving

It's a good idea, where possible, to try out other forms of transport before you stop driving. This will make the transition from driving much smoother, and ensure you stay active and connected to your local community.

In some situations (such as a diagnosis of a serious medical condition, deterioration in eyesight, or a significant collision) there may be no option other than to stop driving immediately. In these instances, the loss of independence can be confronting and the person will need transport support from friends and family, so they can complete daily living tasks and don't become isolated.

There are lots of alternatives to driving, including taxis, rideshare services (such as Uber or Shebah), public transport, travelling with friends or family, home delivery, and for those of us still physically active, walking or riding a bicycle. Melbourne metropolitan public transport is free to Seniors Card holders travelling within two zones on Saturdays and Sundays. Most councils offer local transport solutions, including community buses or volunteer organisations that provide transport for medical appointments. See the last page of this factsheet for some options.

Self-regulation strategies

Aiming to reduce your driving over time is a good way to reduce the safety risk to yourself and others, enabling you to gradually retire from driving. This might start with not driving at night or avoiding scenarios many drivers find stressful—such as driving on busy freeways or in unfamiliar areas.

Sensible self-regulation strategies for reducing driving risk include:

- avoiding busy roads and peak hour traffic
- avoiding glare by not driving at night or into the setting or rising sun
- taking extra care when driving from shaded areas into sunlight and vice versa
- avoiding driving in bad weather—such as rain, fog or frost
- not driving on days when you are not feeling at your best or tired
- avoiding making right hand turns at intersections without traffic lights
- choosing the safest route, rather than the most direct one
- reducing the length of your drive by driving to the most convenient bus, train or tram stop.



Talking to someone about their driving

If safety is in doubt, you can't avoid a discussion about driving.

If you have concerns about someone's driving, you need to talk to them about it—whether they are a spouse, a parent, or a friend. Be open to sharing what you have observed. It's also vital to provide support and advice to people during any transition away from driving.

It is often difficult to view our own driving objectively. If someone raises concerns about your driving, it's important to listen and think about your safety and the safety of others who share the road with you.

Below are some tips to help you prepare to have a conversation with a loved one or a friend about their driving.



Prepare for the conversation

- Be sensitive. Choose a time when they are not driving and are in a relaxed environment. Be mindful that driving is often linked to a person's identity and independence, and it's important to show respect for their driving experience.
- Safety is the central message—for the driver and the safety of others. A history of safe driving should be acknowledged, but it is not a predictor of future risk of crashes. The consequences of unsafe driving and the potential impact on others are often a motivator for people to reflect on their driving.
- If you can, observe their driving and provide specific examples of what concerns you about their driving.
- Be mindful that there is a legal requirement for drivers of any age to report any serious or chronic medical conditions or disabilities to VicRoads. A list of medical conditions requiring mandatory reporting is in the factsheet *Your health and driving*.



Ask questions and listen

Ask if they have any personal concerns about their driving or situations they find uncomfortable or stressful. Medical advice may be required—such as a check-up with a doctor or an eye test—to clarify fitness to drive. Often friends or loved ones identify driving issues, as they see the driver in every day driving situations.



Take a staged approach

- Plan to have a number of conversations with them about their driving over time. The VicRoads factsheet *Aging and safe driving* can help inform these conversations.
- Aim for a transition from driving, where possible. The first step might be to limit driving to local or familiar areas, rather than to stop driving altogether. Look at the list of warning signs and medical conditions that need to be reported to VicRoads.



Offer assistance

- If the driver is willing to self-regulate their driving to reduce risk, be supportive and offer to help with transport alternatives to make this transition easier.
- It may also help to talk about activities that are important to them and plan alternative ways to get there. Behaviour change requires planning and practice; it's the most important part of a smooth transition away from driving.

Reporting a medical condition or driver

A change in health and fitness to drive can occur at any age. It is the driver's responsibility to report their condition to VicRoads.



Self-reporting medical conditions

All Victorian licence holders are required by law to notify VicRoads of any serious, permanent or long term illness, disability, medical condition or injury that may impair their ability to drive safely. To report a medical condition, complete a VicRoads medical report with your doctor and submit it using the email or postal details on the following page. Failure to report a medical condition or disability may put your safety and that of others at risk, and may jeopardise your insurance cover.



Reporting friends or family

If you have concerns about someone's driving, you should raise this directly with them first. You can also check the VicRoads website for the list of medical conditions that must be reported to VicRoads once a driver is diagnosed. If you are genuinely concerned about someone's ability to drive safely, you can post or email a letter to VicRoads, with the driver's details (e.g. name, address) and the reasons for your concern. Under Victorian law, VicRoads must investigate this information. You can remain anonymous.

People making a report in good faith are protected from legal action and VicRoads will not divulge the identity of people who make a report. Once reported, that person may be asked to undergo a medical assessment and/or a licence test, if medical opinion suggests a test is appropriate.



Reporting unknown drivers

Anyone can make a report of a potentially at-risk driver if you observe unsafe driving issues such as speeding or failing to observe stop signs, traffic lights or roundabout signs. You can notify Victoria Police with the vehicle registration number, the gender and approximate age of the driver, and the date, time, place, and description of the observed behaviour. The Police will establish who was driving at the time and notify VicRoads.



VicRoads Medical Review

Once you have notified VicRoads of your medical condition or disability, VicRoads may undertake a medical review. In this process, the medical report from your doctor or other health professional will be reviewed. If you don't have a medical report, we may request that you ask a doctor who is familiar with your medical history to complete one. Any costs associated with the medical report and health appointments are not covered by VicRoads.

VicRoads assesses each medical report on a case-by-case basis. If you have a medical condition that can have an impact on your driving, VicRoads may ask you to do a driver assessment with an Occupational Therapy Driver Assessor. You are responsible for the cost associated with this assessment. VicRoads will write to you if you are required to have one of these assessments.

If your medical review assessment shows you can drive safely, you will keep your driver licence/learner permit. However, depending on the assessment results, you may have specific conditions placed on your driving—for example, you may be limited to driving in daylight hours, or only around your neighbourhood.

VicRoads will only suspend or cancel your driver licence/learner permit if you:

- are assessed as medically unfit to drive
- fail a driving assessment
- do not provide the medical report
- refuse or fail to undergo a test.

You can find an information bulletin about Medical Review and also frequently asked questions about assessing fitness to drive on the VicRoads website.

Email: medicalreview@roads.vic.gov.au

Post: VicRoads Medical Review, PO Box 2504, Kew VIC 3101

Please allow up to 10 days for correspondence to be received by post.

Fax no. 9854 2307. For more information call 13 11 71.

ROBERT'S STORY

Julie's father, Robert, was living independently in country Victoria and had been driving safely for 66 years. Robert lived a couple of kilometres out of town and drove most days to the local shops. Julie received a phone call from Robert's neighbour, reporting that her dad had recently been driving erratically, and that his car had sustained some damage. The neighbour counselled Julie to 'get him off the road quickly'.

Julie knew how important driving was to her father to maintain his independence. He'd already made some changes and no longer drove long distances or at night. A couple of years ago, they had installed blind spot side mirrors on his car to alleviate difficulties turning his head. Threatening to take his keys away wouldn't be respectful; Julie knew a more gradual approach was needed, along with discussions about reducing risks and alternatives to driving.

Julie called Robert to say she was coming to visit and downloaded a driver self-assessment guide from the VicRoads website to take with her.

During the visit, Julie accompanied Robert on his morning drive to the local shops. She noticed his mobility had deteriorated, he found it difficult to get in and out of the car, and he had difficulty manoeuvring the car into and out of a parking spot.

Over the course of the weekend, Julie talked through the self-assessment guide with Robert. He said yes to quite a few of the prompts. At one point, he remarked that the local shops were busier now and he couldn't always get his 'easy' parking spot out the front. Julie reminded him that she wanted him to be safe on the road for as long as possible, but staying safe would mean making some changes to reduce his risk.

Before she left, Julie talked to her father about getting a lift to the shops with his friend Jack, and also asked Jack to check if Robert wanted to carpool sometimes.

On her next visit, Julie gave her dad information from the local council's website about alternative transport services—such as local taxis and a community bus. Robert's friend Jack was now driving him into town once a week, and Julie helped Robert book a taxi for his doctor's appointment that coming week.

After a few weeks, Robert confessed that he enjoyed the company when travelling with others, and didn't miss the stress of finding a car park. Julie asked when the car registration was due and wondered if it was worth the expense renewing it. A couple of months later, happy with his alternative options for getting around, Robert decided to save his money and retire from driving.



Quick links for further information

VicRoads website	RACV website
<p>vicroads.vic.gov.au</p> <p>Search on any of the following terms to find specific information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• medical conditions• medical report• fitness to drive• getting around without a car• self-assessment guide.	<p>racv.com.au</p> <p>Search for 'Transport options for seniors' to find a brochure about getting around on all forms of public transport, taxis and by bike.</p>
Multi Purpose Taxi Program	Victorian Community Transport Association
<p>The Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP) offers half price taxi fares to Victorians with a severe and permanent disability who are experiencing financial hardship. Apply through the Taxi Services Commission: taxi.vic.gov.au</p>	<p>Find details of local community transport services operated by local volunteer groups or local councils. vcta.org.au/ct-services-contacts</p>
Traveller's Aid Companion Service	Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)
<p>Trained volunteers meet travellers and accompany you by public transport to and from your medical, work or education appointment in central Melbourne. Call 1300 700 399 at least 48 hours in advance. Search for 'companion service' at travellersaid.org.au</p>	<p>Covers some travel and accommodation costs incurred by rural Victorians when travelling more than 100 kilometres one way for specialist medical treatment. Call 1300 737 073 or email vptas@dhhs.vic.gov.au</p>