

RSA

# NDLS

**National Driver Licence Service**

*An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta um Cheadúnais Tiomána*

## Vision and Driving

This is an overview of the driving advice for drivers with vision disorders. The complete standards are published in *Sláinte agus Tiomáint: Medical Fitness to Drive (MFTD) Guidelines*.



# Vision and Driving

**This leaflet covers medical fitness to drive relating to vision. These terms are explained below.**

It is very important that you have good vision so you can drive safely. Getting treatment for conditions such as cataracts can help you to drive more comfortably and safely. Wearing glasses or contact lenses, if you need them, will also help your vision when driving.

Vision tests for drivers check the **sharpness** of your vision (i.e. reading letters or shapes of different sizes on a special chart). The tests also check for any weakness in one or both eyes which reduces the **range** of your vision. These tests can be carried out by a doctor or an optometrist (once known as an optician).

If there is any reason to think that your vision might not be adequate for driving, then you should be examined by an eye specialist or an optometrist.

For a certain number of conditions outlined in table 1, the NDLS needs to be informed about the visual condition.

**Table 1: Conditions which should be reported to the NDLS**

<b>a</b>	Any conditions likely to cause progressive loss of vision. This includes, but is not limited to, macular degeneration, glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, and diabetic retinopathy.
<b>b</b>	Vision limited to one eye (monocular vision).*
<b>c</b>	Double vision – when resolved, either spontaneously or with the use of special prism glasses, NDLS must be informed for resuming driving.

\*Drivers with vision limited to one eye are not permitted to hold a Group 2 licence (buses and trucks).

In some cases, this will also be included by the doctor or optometrist in the form filled out at initial licence application (D401) or where a medical certificate is required at licence renewal (D501).

The rules for sharpness and range of vision are stricter for Group 2 drivers (buses and trucks) than for Group 1 drivers (cars, motorcycles, tractors).

If you are a driver with a condition that affects your vision, it is important that you follow the advice of your doctor, optometrist and/or orthoptist. They will recommend treatments such as using the glasses, contact lenses and/or other aids to improve your vision. If you need to wear glasses or contact lenses when driving, this may be noted on your driving licence. This means you will only be allowed to drive when wearing them. The same rule applies if you are allowed to only drive during the daytime.

If you have a visual condition listed in Table 1, you must tell us.

You should include this information on your driving licence application form (D401). Your doctor or optometrist will include it on the medical report that you need to renew your licence (D501).

## Why is health important for drivers?

Your health is important, as driving any motor vehicle requires:

- constant attention;
- good judgement;
- appropriate responsiveness;
- reasonable perception and physical capability; and
- good senses – for example, sight and hearing.

## Why is it important I am fully fit to drive?

- The Road Safety Authority (RSA) and the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) aim to minimise the risk caused by any medical condition you might have both to you and to the community. Indeed, for many conditions, treatment and rehabilitation may improve your safety when driving.
- We also want to give consideration to your social, lifestyle and employment-related mobility and independence. Our aim is to help you be as independently mobile as possible for as long as possible. However, it is important to strike the right balance between mobility and safety for drivers, their families and other road users.
- If you drive against advice, and evidence is found of this, the NDLS and the Gardaí will take action to revoke your licence. If you are involved in a crash or stopped by a member of An Garda Síochána, you may be asked to prove you are in full control of your vehicle. A charge can be brought against you even if you don't have a crash. If you cause harm to a person or property, the charge will be more serious. In these circumstances, driving becomes a statutory offence that may lead to a prison sentence. Finally, driving against medical advice will affect your car insurance.

## FAQs: Frequently asked questions

### What should I do if I feel my vision is getting worse for driving?

You should visit your optometrist. They will tell you if you:

- Need a new prescription for glasses or contact lenses.
- Need to be referred to an ophthalmologist (eye doctor).
- Have a condition you should report to us.

## **What should I do if eye drops have been used to dilate my pupils as part of retinal screening or an assessment by an ophthalmologist or optometrist?**

Eye drops are used to dilate (widen) your pupils when you go for retinopathy screening under the National Diabetes Screening Programme. They may also be used by your ophthalmologist or optometrist during an assessment. These eye drops can change your vision for a while. You should not drive for at least four hours after receiving them or until you feel safe enough to drive again. You should ask someone else to drive your car, arrange a lift, use public transport or, at the very least, leave your car parked until after the four hours and you feel safe to drive.

## **Does colour vision affect fitness to drive?**

Colour blindness does not affect fitness to drive.

## **If I have corrective surgery for my vision, do I need to tell the NDLS?**

If you used to wear glasses or contact lenses for driving but you no longer need them, you should have an up to date eyesight report form (D502) completed by your doctor or optometrist and make an application to the NDLS to update your personal (medical) details.

## **Will wearing glasses to drive make my eyes worse?**

No, this is a myth! Wearing glasses to drive does not make your eyes lazy or dependent on glasses. It makes it easier for you to see road signs. More importantly it makes it easier for you to see and react to traffic and hazards as you drive. You should never drive using reading glasses or ready-readers bought off the shelf.

## Does age make a difference to vision for driving?

Yes! The vision standards stay the same, but as you age you may need more help to meet these standards. This help can include glasses and contact lenses or treatment for cataract, macular degeneration or other eye conditions. Just because you need reading glasses this does not mean you will need glasses for driving. But as you get older you may need some help for driving, even though you might not need to wear glasses for normal vision.

## What will happen if I continue to drive?

It is important to strike a balance between mobility and safety. If you continue to drive against medical advice or ignore early warning symptoms, and evidence is found of this, it will affect your insurance, and the NDLS and the Gardaí will take action to revoke (cancel) your licence.

## Be a responsible driver

### It is your responsibility as a driver to:

- follow your doctor's advice
- take your prescribed medication correctly and consistently
- monitor and manage your medical condition(s)
- tell the NDLS and your insurance provider if you have a long-term or permanent injury or illness that may affect your ability to drive safely
- meet the requirements of your licence, including going for regular medical check-ups to make sure that your symptoms are managed well for safe driving
- get professional medical advice on your medical fitness to drive, which might include training with an On-Road Driving Assessor (ORDA) or Occupational Therapist (OT)
- get further professional medical advice if you develop a new medical condition or if your medical condition changes.

## If I need to, how do I inform the NDLS?

If following a consultation with your doctor, your medical condition is one that must be notified to the NDLS you will need to have a medical report form completed and make an application for a change of personal (medical) details. This can be done by

- applying in person at an NDLS centre, which is by appointment only. Please see **[www.ndls.ie/how-to-apply/applying-in-person](http://www.ndls.ie/how-to-apply/applying-in-person)**
- applying online\*, provided you have a Public Services Card and a verified MyGovID account.

\*If you have a code 101 on your existing licence and you are not renewing and you wish to update your medical details you will need to attend an NDLS centre to have this done.

The NDLS does not accept notifications of medical conditions by email or post.

For further information, please see **[www.ndls.ie/medical-fitness](http://www.ndls.ie/medical-fitness)**

If you have more questions, please email **[medicalfitness@rsa.ie](mailto:medicalfitness@rsa.ie)** or telephone **096 25000**.



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