

# OT assessments

## Occupational therapists and driving

Factsheet

**51**

November  
2018

ISSN 1172-0689 (print)  
ISSN 1172-0778 (online)

Sometimes you're required to provide a medical certificate as part of your driver licence application.

You need a medical certificate from your health practitioner if you:

- are a professional driver renewing your endorsements
- are applying for or renewing a class 2, 3, 4 or 5 licence and you haven't submitted a medical certificate of the same medical standards in the last five years\*
- have a medical condition that has affected your ability to drive safely (eg stroke, diabetes, epilepsy, locomotor disorders)
- are requested to do so by the NZ Transport Agency
- are renewing your licence past your 75th birthday
- are applying for a new licence or endorsement and are 74 ½ years of age or older.

\* Please note that the following classes and endorsements are considered to be of the same medical standards:

- Private classes: classes 1 and 6 licences and D, F, R, T and W endorsements.
- Commercial classes: classes 2, 3, 4 and 5 licences and P, V, I and O endorsements.

The health practitioner could be your usual doctor (GP), a registered nurse or nurse practitioner, or a specialist if appropriate.

If your health practitioner is not satisfied with your fitness to drive for the classes or endorsements you're applying for, he or she may refer you to an *occupational therapist for a driving assessment*.

A driving assessment by an occupational therapist is a medical check, requested by your health practitioner or the Transport Agency. If you're assessed as medically fit to drive, after completing the driving assessment, you must still complete the driver licence application process before any new or renewed driver licence may be issued.

### What the driving assessment involves

Driving assessments are carried out by registered occupational therapists.

First, you'll have an assessment in the therapist's office (this is called an *off-road assessment*). Then they'll take you out for a practical driving assessment (this is called an *on-road assessment*).

### The off-road assessment

This part of the assessment will take up to two hours. The occupational therapist will carry out a thorough check of:

- your vision (basic screening)
- your physical functions (such as range of movement, strength, sensation and coordination)
- your judgement
- your memory
- your directional orientation
- your movement and decision-making times
- how your mind understands what you see
- your knowledge of road rules and signs.

The therapist may use a computer-based tool for part of this assessment.

### The on-road assessment

Occasionally, a driver's off-road assessment suggests they should not be driving. If this happens, the occupational therapist may still want you to proceed with the on-road assessment, to confirm the off-road assessment results.

The on-road assessment further assesses the impact that any disability or illness, or aging, might be having on your ability to drive safely.

During the on-road assessment, you'll be accompanied by the occupational therapist. Sometimes a specially trained driving instructor will be there as well.

You'll tackle a range of driving situations – for example:

- driving on both the open road and urban roads
- driving through controlled and uncontrolled intersections
- parking
- manoeuvring.

The on-road assessment may involve approximately 40–60 minutes of driving.

If you don't have a current driver licence, make your assessor aware of this at least one week before the assessment, so they can get one on your behalf. Without a temporary licence, you'll be unable to sit the on-road assessment.

### What happens after the driving assessment

When you've finished both parts of the driving assessment, the occupational therapist will write a report outlining their observations and providing a professional recommendation.

This report will be sent back to the health practitioner who asked for you to be assessed.

The health practitioner will read the report then decide whether or not they consider you medically fit to drive the classes or endorsements that you wish to apply for or renew.

If the health practitioner gives you a medical certificate confirming you are fit to drive, you can continue with your driver licensing application.

To find out more about licence renewal for older drivers, read Factsheet 57 *Older drivers: licence renewal*.

## Where you can find out more

If you want more information, you could:

- speak to your GP
- contact Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa online: [www.otnz.co.nz](http://www.otnz.co.nz) or by email: [otnz@otnz.co.nz](mailto:otnz@otnz.co.nz)
- call us on 0800 822 422.

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### Contact details

- Call us: 0800 822 422.
- Visit our website: [www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz).
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