

## **Aging Drivers Questions and Answers**

*As we get older, we all have to make decisions on how much we drive, what time of day we drive and when it might even be time to stop driving altogether. There are also some medical and licence renewal processes that occur over time.*

*This website is designed to give you answers to some of the most frequently asked questions that we hear from aging drivers. We've also provided some useful links to medical forms and information that will help you get a better understanding of how these processes work. We believe that the more information you have, the more equipped you will be to make the right decisions. This will also help you prepare for anything you may wish to discuss with your doctor related to driving. For additional information, please feel free to call Alberta Transportation anonymously at 780-427-8230 or toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000. Office hours are 8:15 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday.*

### **General Requirements To Renew A Driver's Licence**

**1. Is there a specific age when I'll have to give up my driver's licence?**

No. As long as you can safely operate a vehicle, you can renew your licence at any age. Alberta Transportation renews your licence based on your ability to drive safely, regardless of your age. Though rare, there are people older than 100 who still have licences.

**2. Does Alberta Transportation discourage people from driving beyond a certain age?**

No. Our team at Alberta Transportation encourages you to drive as long as you can do it safely, regardless of your age. It's about finding a balance between maximizing your mobility and ensuring your safety and that of everyone else on the road.

**3. Do I have to have a medical test or road test at a certain age?**

Yes. For most licence renewals (Classes 5, 6, or 7), a medical report form signed by a doctor is required at:

- 75 years;
- 80 years; and
- every two years after.

There is **no specific age** when a road test is required, but a road test may be recommended by your doctor or Alberta Transportation to help determine your ability to drive safely.

**4. Why is testing required at certain ages?**

The age requirements are based on research that shows some medical conditions or cognitive challenges are more common at certain ages. B.C., Ontario, and Quebec also use age thresholds for medical reporting. That said, Alberta Transportation evaluates your ability to drive safely on an **individual** basis, regardless of your age.

**5. Do I have to disclose my medical conditions before I can renew my licence?**

Yes. You are **legally obligated** to disclose any medical conditions that may affect your ability to drive safely. A list of medical conditions and further information is available [here](#).

**6. Does my doctor have to disclose any medical conditions that may affect my ability to drive?**

Doctors or other medical professionals are not legally required to report suspected medically at-risk drivers to Alberta Transportation. However, they are also protected from legal action should they do so. This legal protection encourages doctors to report suspected at-risk drivers, which helps protect all road users.

**7. How does Alberta Transportation decide which medical conditions should be monitored?**

Alberta uses the [national medical standards for drivers](#) to determine minimum medical and vision qualifications for safe driving. These standards were developed by medical professionals and provincial licensing authorities throughout Canada.

**8. I was given a longer term between required medicals on my current licence. Now my latest renewal notice indicates my term is back to one year between required medicals. Can I retain the longer term?**

If there are no changes to your health and your medical condition is stable, you may re-qualify for the longer term. Contact [Alberta Transportation](#) to request an extension.

## **Testing**

### **9. Can any doctor do the medical report or is there a list of approved doctors to go to?**

Most general practitioners and geriatric specialists do medical evaluations related to renewing a licence. Your doctor will either do the evaluation or refer you to another doctor.

### **10. What is involved in the medical test?**

The basic medical test looks at key areas in so far that they affect the ability to safely operate a vehicle:

- vision,
- hearing,
- cognitive abilities, and
- overall health.

If you have a medical condition, your doctor may look at whether that condition affects your driving ability. Your doctor may also recommend a road test or further cognitive or medical testing before approving your [medical form](#).

### **11. How does Alberta Transportation make sure that the doctor actually did the evaluation and didn't just simply sign the form?**

Alberta Transportation is confident that doctors have their patients' best interests in mind and are conducting the evaluations properly. Doctors are aware that it is against the law to falsify a document.

## **Quick Facts on DriveABLE**

### **12. Is DriveABLE a government test?**

DriveABLE is a private company and not affiliated with the Government of Alberta.

### **13. I've heard of people being referred to DriveABLE for more testing and then their licences get pulled because they fail the test. Why does DriveABLE have the ability to pull a licence?**

*Only the Registrar of Motor Vehicles has the authority to cancel or suspend a driver's licence.*

The assessment results are reviewed by the doctor with the patient and can be provided to Alberta Transportation. The Registrar uses the physician's report along with a variety of other information to determine your ability to drive safely, such as:

- medical documentation,

- driving record, and
- road test results.

If a medical condition requires further review or interpretation as to how it relates to the [national medical standards for drivers](#), the file is referred to a Medical Review Committee for advice.

The Registrar's decision may be appealed to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board.

#### **14. What is a DriveABLE test and what is involved?**

The [DriveABLE test](#) asks you to do six tasks on a touch screen that measure driving skill. For example, you would be asked to guide a box through a moving broken line that simulates the same skill necessary to judge gaps in traffic. The test takes 30 to 60 minutes to complete and is done at a DriveABLE centre. **The DriveABLE test is not mandatory.** It is a tool your doctor may use to further test your cognitive abilities. DriveABLE charges a fee to the patient for this test.

#### **15. Can I ask for a standard road test instead of having to take the DriveABLE test?**

Yes, and this is something you should discuss with your doctor. Your doctor may recommend you take a road test in addition to other medical or cognitive testing. Alberta Transportation may also ask you to take a road test to help determine your ability to safely drive.

#### **16. Does it cost me anything to take the road test?**

There is no charge for the road test if your doctor or Alberta Transportation has requested the test.

### **Quick Facts on the SIMARD MD Test**

#### **17. What is the Simard MD test and what is involved in the test?**

The Simard MD is a test doctors use to detect potential cognitive challenges that may affect your ability to drive safely. **The SIMARD MD test is not mandatory.** Your doctor decides whether or not to use the test as part of your evaluation. The test is taken in your doctor's office and takes approximately 20 minutes. It involves the doctor asking you a series of questions such as identifying objects found in a grocery store or asking you to repeat letters or numbers in sequence. More information on the SIMARD MD test is found [here](#).

The SIMARD MD test was developed by the University of Alberta's Medically At-Risk Driver Centre.

This test is conducted free of charge to the patient.

**18. If I fail the SIMARD MD test, do I lose my licence?**

No. The test is a screening tool used to identify potential cognitive challenges. Based on its results, your doctor may recommend further cognitive testing or a road test. The assessment results are reviewed by the doctor with the patient and can be provided to Alberta Transportation. The Registrar of Motor Vehicles reviews the doctor's assessment along with a variety of other information to determine your ability to drive safely, such as medical documentation, driving record, and road test results.

**Process – Renewing or Not Renewing a Licence**

**19. What if I don't agree with my doctor's evaluation? Is there an appeal process?**

Alberta Transportation considers appeals on a case-by-case basis. If you do not agree with your doctor's assessment, you can forward your concerns to Alberta Transportation:

- Alberta Transportation will review your file using a variety of information to determine your ability to drive safely. This can include medical documentation, your driving record, and results from road or functional tests, for example.
- A Medical Review Committee may also review your file and provide advice to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles.
- Based on all this advice and information, the Registrar makes a decision to renew your licence, renew your licence with conditions, or suspend your licence.
- The Registrar's decision may be further appealed to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board.

**20. My doctor said I'm okay to drive during the day, but that I shouldn't drive at night due to my vision. My doctor won't approve my medical form. Is there something I can do about this or is there a way to keep my licence if I agree not to drive at night?**

You may be able to get a conditional licence that restricts driving to certain times of the day, locations, or distance from your home. Other conditions may apply such as the need for annual road or vision tests in order to renew your licence.

You should check with Alberta Transportation's [Driver Fitness and Monitoring](#) section for further details.

**21. Can I take a driving class that is specially designed for older drivers?**

Yes. Several driver training schools in Alberta offer programs for older drivers. You can contact a school for further information. A list of driver training schools is available [here](#).

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