

RSA

NDLS

National Driver Licence Service

An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta um Cheadúnais Tiomána

Cardiac Conditions and Driving

This is an overview of driving with cardiology (heart) conditions. The complete standards are published in *Sláinte agus Tiomáint: Medical Fitness to Drive (MFTD) Guidelines* available at www.ndls.ie



Be a responsible driver

It is your responsibility as a driver to:

- take any prescribed medication and manage your condition(s);
- stop driving if any of the medications you are taking for your heart have side effects that affect your ability to drive – for example drowsiness;
- tell the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) and your insurance provider of any long-term or permanent injury or illness that may affect your ability to drive safely;
- comply with requirements of your licence as appropriate, including periodic medical reviews;
- get professional advice on your medical fitness to drive if you develop a medical condition during the term of your licence.

Note: You are committing an offence if you carry on driving after you become aware that you are not fit to do so. 'Awareness' can be your own awareness – that is, things you notice yourself without being diagnosed by a doctor. For example, dizziness, fainting and so on. Awareness can also be as a result of a warning not to drive from your doctor.

Tell the NDLS about your condition

You need to declare certain heart conditions on your Application or Renewal Form for a Driving Licence, under **Part 5: Driver Fitness**. Return your completed application with a **D501 Medical Report Form** completed by your doctor. (Please see www.ndls.ie for this and other forms.)

Driving a car, motor cycle or tractor (Group 1) Driver Guidelines

If you develop a heart condition during the term of your licence, your doctor will advise you on when you can resume driving and whether you need to contact the NDLS. The following pages set out some of the standards given in the Medical Fitness to Drive guidelines.

Driving a car, motor cycle or tractor (Group 1)

Driver Guidelines

| If you have this cardiac condition: | These are the guidelines to follow: |
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| a heart attack (acute myocardial infarction) | If you are successfully treated with angioplasty, you must stop driving for at least 1 – 4 weeks, and your doctor will advise you on when you can resume driving. |
| angina | You must stop driving if you experience symptoms when you are at rest, with emotion, or at the wheel. Driving may be resumed when your symptoms are satisfactorily under control. |
| elective angioplasty and/or stent | You should not drive for 2 days after angioplasty/stent. |
| atrial fibrillation/arrhythmia | You should not drive after an acute episode that caused dizziness or fainting. You may resume driving when the underlying cause has been identified and controlled for at least 4 weeks. NDLS need not be notified unless there are distracting or disabling symptoms. |
| cardiomyopathy | You may drive if you don't have symptoms when you moderately exert yourself. This is provided you don't have any other disqualifying condition. |
| an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) | You should not drive until your doctor clears you to do so. The standards and period of recovery time required for a return to driving are set out the Medical Fitness to drive (MFTD) Guidelines. Your doctor will advise you if you need to notify NDLS. |
| a cardiac pacemaker | You should not drive for 1 week after having a pacemaker inserted. |
| open heart surgery (CABG) | You must stop driving for at least 4 weeks. After that, you can resume driving if you have no other disqualifying condition. |
| successful catheter ablation | You should not drive for at least 2 days. |

Driving a bus or truck (Group 2)

Driver guidelines

Generally, Group 2 drivers with cardiac conditions must stop driving for longer periods than Group 1 drivers – for example, after a seizure or a heart attack.

If you develop a heart condition during the term of your licence, your doctor will advise you on when you can resume driving and whether you need to contact the NDLS. Below are some of the standards given in the Medical Fitness to Drive guidelines.

| Driving a bus or truck (Group 2) | |
|---|--|
| Driver Guidelines | |
| If you have this cardiac condition: | These are the guidelines to follow: |
| a heart attack (acute myocardial infarction) | You must stop driving for at least 4 weeks, and your doctor will advise you on when you can resume driving. You must notify NDLS. |
| angina | If you have any symptoms – whether they are being treated or not – you must stop driving. You should not resume driving until: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• you are free from angina symptoms for at least 4 weeks;• you can satisfy the exercise or other functional test requirements; and• you have no other disqualifying condition. You must notify NDLS. |
| elective angioplasty and/or stent | You must stop driving for at least 4 weeks. After that, you may resume driving if you can satisfy the exercise or other functional test requirements and you have no other disqualifying condition. You must notify NDLS. |

Driving a bus or truck (Group 2)

Driver Guidelines

| If you have this cardiac condition: | These are the guidelines to follow: |
|--|--|
| atrial fibrillation, cardiac arrhythmia | You must not drive if the arrhythmia has caused or is likely to cause incapacity. You may resume driving when the arrhythmia is controlled for at least 3 months and you have no other disqualifying condition. You do not have to notify the NDLS unless there are distracting/disabling symptoms. |
| cardiomyopathy | You must not drive if you have any symptoms for example shortness of breath, extreme fatigue, dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, chest pain and pressure (angina), heart palpitations, swelling in the legs and feet (edema) and abdomen (tummy). You can only resume driving when your doctor is satisfied that you meet the criteria set out in the Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines. You must have exercise testing every 3 years. You must notify NDLS. |
| an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) | You must not drive. You must notify NDLS and surrender your Group 2 licence. |
| a cardiac pacemaker | You should not drive for 4 weeks after a pacemaker is inserted. You may resume driving after that provided you have no other disqualifying condition. |
| open heart surgery (CABG) | You must stop driving for at least 3 months. You may resume driving after that provided your doctor(s) is satisfied that you meet the criteria set out in the MFTD Guidelines. You must notify NDLS. |
| successful catheter ablation for an arrhythmia that has caused or would likely have caused incapacity | You should not drive for 6 weeks. |

Tips about resuming driving

- If you are in any doubt about your fitness to drive, please consult your doctor.
- When you resume driving, take it in easy stages.
- Driving with a passenger can be helpful.
- Avoid heavy traffic and motorways until you know you can cope.
- Give yourself plenty of time for your journey.
- Do not drive for longer than 2 hours without a break.
- Try to keep calm and relaxed. If you find driving stressful, leave it for a while until you feel a bit better.

Know when to stop

You should stop driving if you experience:

- central chest pain, tightness or pressure that may spread to your jaw or arms,
- shortness of breath,
- excessive fatigue,
- dizziness, fainting, nausea or sweatiness.

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is your legal responsibility as a driver to stop driving and consult with your doctor who will try to help you manage your symptoms.

What if I don't agree that I should stop driving?

If your doctor tells you to stop driving and you disagree, you can get a second opinion. You must stop driving until the opinion has been completed and you get permission to drive again.

What will happen if I still 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 Gardaí will take action to remove your licence.

How do I inform the NDLS?

If, following consultation with your GP, your medical condition is one that needs to be notified to the NDLS, you need to complete forms (1) and (2) below and return in person to any NDLS centre.

You need to bring:

- 1) a completed Driver Licence Application Form;
- 2) a Medical Report Form (D501) completed by your doctor (a letter from your doctor is not accepted);
- 3) proof of your PPSN; and
- 4) your current licence.

You will then, within a specified time frame, be issued with a new, updated licence.

Please see **www.ndls.ie** for locations/bookings and forms.

If you have more questions, please email **medicalfitness@rsa.ie** or telephone **1890 40 60 40**.

Please note if you have supplied a medical report form to obtain your existing licence or permit and the terms of licence or permit are not being altered, you may submit your new application together with your medical report form by post to:

National Driver Licence Service, PO Box 858, Southside Delivery Office, Co Cork.

Further information sources:

- Your GP or nurse
- HSE Web: infoline1@hse.ie
- HSE Helpline: 1850 24 1850
- IHF Web: <http://www.irishheart.ie>



National Driver Licence Service



Plain English
Approved by NALA

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