

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



This leaflet covers medical fitness to drive relating to cardiac (heart) conditions.

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 that 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.

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:
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 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**
- 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**

If you have more questions, please email **medicalfitness@rsa.ie** or telephone **096 25000**.

Further information:

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



National Driver Licence Service