

Let's Talk About Driving After Stroke

Can I drive after a stroke?

Driving is often a major concern after a stroke. It's not unusual for stroke survivors to want to drive. Getting around after a stroke is important — but safety is even more important. Injury to the brain may change how you do things. So before you drive again, think carefully about how these changes may affect safety for you, your family and others.



What are some warning signs of unsafe driving?

Often survivors are unaware of the difficulties in driving that they might have. Some may not realize all of the effects of their stroke. They may feel that they're able to drive, when it's a bad idea. Driving against your doctor's advice can be dangerous and may be illegal. In some cases, your doctor may have the legal responsibility to notify your state that you've been advised not to drive.

If you or someone you know has experienced some of these warning signs of unsafe driving, please consider having your driving tested:

- Drives too fast or too slow for road conditions or posted speeds
- Needs help or instructions from passengers
- Doesn't observe signs or signals
- Makes slow or poor distance decisions
- Gets easily frustrated or confused
- Often gets lost, even in familiar areas
- Has accidents or close calls
- Drifts across lane markings into other lanes

How can I tell if I can drive?

- Talk to your doctor or occupational therapist. He or she can tell you about your stroke and whether it might change your driving. You'll also get a professional opinion based on experience.
- Contact your State Department of Motor Vehicles in your area. Ask for the Office of Driver Safety. Ask what requirements apply to people who've had a stroke.
- Have your driving tested. Professionals such as driver rehabilitation specialists can evaluate your driving ability. You'll get a behind-the-wheel evaluation and be tested for vision perception, functional ability, reaction time, judgment and cognitive abilities (thinking and problem solving). Call community rehabilitation centers or your local Department of Motor Vehicles.






How can I tell if I can drive? (continued)

- Enroll in a driver's training program. For a fee, you may receive a driving assessment, classroom instruction and suggestions for modifying your vehicle (if necessary). These programs are often available through rehabilitation centers.
- Ask your family if they have noticed changes in your communication, thinking, judgment or behavior that should be evaluated before you drive again. They often have many more opportunities to observe changes than others do.

How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets.
- For more information about stroke, or to get more fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:
 - ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers trained to answer your questions and offer support.
 - ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area.
 - ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection*, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.

What are the warning signs of stroke?

-  **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
-  **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
-  **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
-  **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
-  **Sudden, severe headaches with no known cause**



Learn to recognize a stroke. *Because time lost is brain lost.*

Today there are treatments that may reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly — within three hours of your first symptoms.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience these warning signs!

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider:

When should I test my driving ability?

If not, when might I be able to drive again?

Is my driving restriction permanent?

