

Glaucoma and driving

Road safety and Medical Review

Victoria's vision is to create a safe system of roads, laws, vehicles, drivers and behaviour that supports and improves the safe movement of our community. This includes supporting drivers to drive at any age so long as they are medically fit to do so.

We encourage people with medical conditions to speak with their doctor to understand their health conditions and the potential impact on their driving.

Drivers are obligated under law to report to Medical Review any medical conditions that could adversely impact their ability to drive.

What are my obligations?

You are legally required to notify Medical Review if you have any serious or chronic medical conditions, injuries or disabilities (or the effects of treatment for any of those things) that may affect your fitness to drive. This includes glaucoma. Failure to notify could also affect your insurance cover.

You should be aware that some medicines may also affect your ability to drive safely. Discuss this with your doctor. It is illegal to drive if you are affected by medicine(s).

Medical Review determines your fitness to drive on a case by case basis in accordance with national medical standards. Medical advice and assessment outcomes are also considered.

It's important to keep your address up to date. We will likely send you letters keeping you updated about the medical review. If you move, you must update your address within 14 days – you can do this online, over the phone or at a VicRoads Customer Service Centre.

Medical Standards for commercial truck, taxi and bus drivers are stricter than those for car drivers.

To retain your licence/permit you must provide a medical report to Medical Review. You will also be asked to provide report(s) from a registered optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Medical Review may vary, suspend or cancel your learner permit or driver licence on medical grounds. Your permit/licence may be reissued if you provide a satisfactory medical report and meet other licensing requirements.

You can request a refund of the remainder of your driver licence fee if your licence is cancelled, or if you decide to surrender it.

You can write to the Department and ask for an Internal Review of any decision. An independent person will review the decision and reply to you within 28 days.

You may also have the right to appeal to the Magistrates' Court if the department has made a discretionary decision to cancel, suspend or vary your driver licence or learner permit.

It is important for you to know that there is no right to appeal to the Magistrates Court if our decision to cancel, suspend or vary your driver licence or learner permit is a mandatory decision, made under section 24(1) of the *Road Safety Act 1986*.

Keep in mind that if you lose an appeal at the Magistrates' Court, you may have to pay costs.

Each driver is reviewed individually to determine the outcome that is best for the safety of the individual and the community.

If you can show that you can drive safely, but only under certain conditions, a conditional licence may be considered. A wide range of conditions are possible to maximise your safety and that of other road users. Common licence conditions include wearing corrective eye glasses, driving automatic vehicles, driving in daylight hours or only in certain areas.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is an eye disease in which the optic nerve at the back of the eye is slowly destroyed. In most people this damage is due to increased pressure inside the eye. In other patients the damage may be caused by poor blood supply to the vital optic nerve fibres, a weakness in the structure of the nerve, and/or a problem with the health of the nerve fibres themselves.

There are no warning signs and generally there is no pain associated with glaucoma. The loss of sight is gradual and a considerable amount of peripheral vision may be lost before the person becomes aware of any problem.

As any damage caused by glaucoma is irreversible, early detection is important.

Who is at risk of glaucoma?

Up to 300,000 Australians have glaucoma but only half of them have been diagnosed. Glaucoma is more common as people age. However, it can occur at any age and some people are more at risk than others.

You are more at risk if you:

- have a blood relative with glaucoma
- have diabetes and/or blood pressure problems
- are short-sighted (myopia) or long-sighted (hyperopia)
- have suffered a previous eye injury
- have used cortisone drugs (steroids) over an extensive period of time
- suffer from migraine and/or poor circulation.

Please talk to your eye specialist if you have any concerns.

Driving with glaucoma

You must be able to see properly to drive safely. Drivers with poor peripheral vision are more at risk of crashing than drivers with normal peripheral vision.

Drivers with glaucoma have reduced peripheral vision which may prevent them from seeing cars close to them when pulling in or out of traffic or when overtaking. Also they may not see pedestrians stepping onto the road or cyclists.

How is glaucoma detected?

As there is no simple way of checking for glaucoma yourself, regular eye examinations are recommended.

Can glaucoma be treated?

Once glaucoma is detected treatment can usually prevent, or at least slow any further loss of sight.

Treatment generally involves prescribed eye drops to reduce the pressure inside the eye.

However, avoid driving if you feel that your eye drops are affecting your vision. If you have a concern, consult your ophthalmologist.

Who do I go to for a glaucoma check-up?

Any ophthalmologist (eye specialist) or optometrist will be able to perform the simple, painless tests for glaucoma.

If your vision is being tested for prescription spectacles, or if you are over the age of 40, ask for a glaucoma test.

Where can I learn more about glaucoma?

You can contact the national organisation called Glaucoma Australia who provide information and support to glaucoma sufferers.

For more information about Glaucoma Australia or glaucoma please contact:

Glaucoma Australia

Call 1800 500 880

Web glaucoma.org.au

Medical Review

For more information about the medical review process, please contact the Medical Review team.

Web transport.vic.gov.au/medical-review

Email medicalreview@roads.vic.gov.au

Call (03) 8391 3226

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