



Occupational
Therapy Australia



IS YOUR PATIENT FIT TO DRIVE?

- Is your patient's family concerned about his/her driving safety?
- Do you feel uncertain about your patient's ability to drive?
- Does your patient have changes with their thinking/cognition or have a physical impairment?
- Is your patient's level of pain affecting their ability to drive or is their medication causing reduced concentration?
- Would your patient like to return to driving following injury or illness?

Determining fitness to drive can be challenging and may present difficult decisions.

The primary aim of assessing fitness to drive is to assist drivers with medical conditions to continue to drive safely and legally, and to identify when driver safety and public safety is compromised.

Information about functional driving skills and recommendations gained from an Occupational Therapy driving assessment may support your medical assessment and facilitate decision making around your patient's capacity to drive.

WHO ASSESSES FITNESS TO DRIVE?

The national medical guideline "Assessing Fitness to Drive" (Austroads, 2012) provides a uniform framework of clear minimum medical requirements to assist decision-making by health professionals and the State Licencing Authority (SLA).

WHEN IS A PRACTICAL DRIVING ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Austroads (2012) states that a practical driving assessment is necessary when clarifying the impact of complex medical conditions on driving ability.

General Practitioners

In most circumstances, assessment of medical fitness to drive for private and commercial vehicles can be conducted by a General Practitioner.

General Practitioners are responsible for:

- providing advice about the impact of medical conditions on driving capacity and recommendations for management and monitoring.
- recommendations about suitability to hold a drivers' licence.
- completion of Medical Certificate of Fitness or relevant documentation.
- mandatory reporting in South Australia if a person's medical condition makes them medically unfit to drive.
- requesting a medical specialist assessment as indicated by Austroads (2012).
- requesting a driving assessment to make definitive decision about fitness to drive when complex medical conditions present.

WHO DOES PRACTICAL DRIVING ASSESSMENTS?

Occupational Therapist Driver Assessors (OTDA)

Occupational Therapists who are trained in driver assessment and rehabilitation are responsible for assessing a person's driving function and capacity by:

- analysing and evaluating driving performance
- identifying factors limiting driving performance
- determining vehicle modifications and adaptive controls to overcome limitations
- determining strategies to enhance, develop or restore driving skills where possible

Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment has 2 components:

1. Pre-Drive Assessment:

The Pre-Drive Assessment evaluates functional skills related to driving, including physical, sensory, visual, visual perceptual and cognitive skills.

2. On-Road Assessment:

The On-Road Assessment provides confirmation of functional ability and the extent to which medical conditions impact on driving performance. Suitability of vehicle modifications and driver rehabilitation programs can be determined.

OTDA's work closely with Driving Instructors who are skilled in road craft and road law. On-Road Assessments are conducted in the Driving Instructor's vehicle which has dual brakes and vehicle modifications if required.

A number of OTDA's have additional training for assessing drivers of heavy vehicles, public passenger vehicles and motorcycles.

WHAT IF A DRIVING ASSESSMENT HAS IDENTIFIED THAT MY PATIENT HAS DIFFICULTY WITH DRIVING?

It may be appropriate for your patient to undergo a driver rehabilitation program.

A rehabilitation program can build skills and incorporate adaptive strategies. This can include a specific program of driving lessons designed and monitored by an OTDA.

If a driver rehabilitation program or vehicle modification is recommended, a State Licencing Authority licence test may also be required. Licencing remains the responsibility of the authority; the licencing test is one of compliance with road rules and safety standards and is conducted by an accreditation officer.

It may be determined that your patient is no longer able to continue to drive safely.

If cessation of driving is recommended, Occupational Therapists offer training and support to help people use alternate means of community mobility to maintain their social, recreational and vocational roles and activities.

HOW DO I ORGANISE AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DRIVER ASSESSMENT?

OTDA's work in public healthcare services and in private practice.

Please click on the link for current information on SA public and private [Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment and Rehabilitation Services](#), or telephone OT Australia, South Australia Division on **08 8332 6600**.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Occupational Therapy Australia - South Australia – www.otaus.com.au

To locate the OT Australia Position Paper: Occupational Therapy and drive assessment and rehabilitation (October 2015) please use the search terms 'Advocacy' followed by 'Position Statements' in the otaus site.

Austroroads Assessing Fitness to Drive (2012) – <http://www.austroroads.com.au>

Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure – <http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au>