

Driving Safety and Diabetes

What you need to know if you have diabetes and drive a motorized vehicle.



Diabetes may affect your ability to drive; therefore, if you have diabetes and are a private or commercial driver it is your responsibility to make sure that you are driving safely.

What are your responsibilities as a driver with diabetes?

- Attend regular appointments with your family physician or diabetes specialist (a minimum of 2 visits a year)
- Have your family physician or diabetes specialist complete a *Ministry of Transportation (MTO) Diabetes Assessment form* with license application or renewal as necessary
- Maintain your own medical records
- Monitor your blood glucose (sugar) using an accurate blood glucose meter and keep an accurate monitoring log
- Know the causes and symptoms of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), and how to prevent and treat it

When you take insulin or some types of pills for diabetes, you are at risk of having a low blood sugar while driving. If you have a low blood sugar while driving, you are a danger to yourself and others.

Your blood sugar should be over 5.0 mmol/L to drive
“Over 5 to Drive”

If you drive a commercial vehicle, there are different guidelines for your blood sugar level. See page 3.

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What do I need to do before I drive?

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- Before you get behind the wheel make sure that you have your blood glucose meter and testing supplies, as well as a supply of fast-acting carbohydrate (e.g. glucose tablets or juice) within reach.
- **Test your blood sugar just before driving and then approximately every 4 hours if you go for a long drive.**
- If your blood sugar is **over 5.0 mmol/L**, you can drive.
- If your blood sugar is **4.0 to 5.0 mmol/L**, eat a snack with carbohydrate, such as cheese and crackers or ½ sandwich to raise your blood sugar over 5.0 mmol/L.
- If your blood sugar is **less than 4.0 mmol/L** or you have symptoms of a low blood sugar, you need to raise your blood sugar quickly.

How do I treat low blood sugar?

Step 1

- Stop what you are doing.
- Eat or drink 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrate. Choose one of these:
 - 3 to 6 glucose tablets (depending on brand)
 - 3 teaspoons of table sugar (may be dissolved in water)
 - 3 teaspoons of honey
 - ¾ cup regular pop or juice
 - 6 candies

Step 2

- Wait 15 minutes. Do not drive.
- Check your blood sugar again:
 - If your blood sugar is still **5.0 mmol/L or less** or your symptoms have not gone away, repeat Step 1.
 - If your blood sugar is **over 5.0 mmol/L**, have a snack such as cheese and crackers or ½ sandwich to keep your blood sugar above 5.0 mmol/L.

When you treat a low blood sugar, always wait 45 to 60 minutes before you drive. You need this time to fully recover and be able to drive safely.

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Diabetes and commercial driving

Driving Safety and Diabetes

If you drive a commercial vehicle, there are different guidelines for your blood sugar level.

Your blood sugar should be over 6.0 mmol/L to drive
a commercial vehicle
“Over 6 to Commercially Drive”

What do I need to do before I drive a commercial vehicle?

- Before you get behind the wheel make sure that you have your blood glucose meter and testing supplies, as well as a supply of fast-acting carbohydrate (e.g. glucose tablets or juice) within reach.
- **Test your blood sugar within 1 hour before driving and then approximately every 4 hours while driving.**
- If your blood sugar is **over 6.0 mmol/L**, you can drive.
- If your blood sugar is **less than 6.0 mmol/L**, treat and re-test until your blood sugar is above 6.0 mmol/L. Once your blood glucose reaches this level you are OK to drive.

What is required to obtain a commercial license?

- Initial assessment by an internist, endocrinologist or a family physician trained in diabetes care.
- Full eye exam by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
- Completion of a questionnaire that is based on risk (work schedule, insulin regimen, and symptoms of hypoglycemia) and occurrence of hypoglycemia.
- Evidence that you attend a diabetes education centre.
- Medical records for the past 24 months and a glycosylated hemoglobin test (HbA1C) performed within the past 3 months.
- Record of your blood glucose test results, showing a minimum of twice daily testing during the last 6 months.

All insulin-treated commercial drivers are required to re-certify on an annual basis. A medical examination is required to recertify.

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What are the exclusion criteria for maintaining a commercial license?

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- Hypoglycemia requiring assistance or that caused loss of consciousness within the past 6 months.
- Hypoglycemia unawareness unless there is documentation of recovery of the warning symptoms.
- Uncontrolled diabetes: HbA1C level greater than or equal to 12%; or, more than 10% of blood glucose levels less than 4 mmol/L.
- Visual impairment and high-risk proliferative retinopathy.
- Nerve damage or heart disease with the potential to affect driving.
- Inadequate record of your blood glucose monitoring.
- Poor knowledge of the causes, symptoms and treatment of hypoglycemia.

Note: Whenever you have a significant change to your insulin regimen, (i.e. a change in the type of insulin, number of insulin injections or introduction to insulin) you will need to be assessed frequently with respect to hypoglycemia. You will be permitted to drive if the variation in your blood glucose levels indicates minimal risk.

Notes: