



# Returning to Driving

After a spinal cord injury, you may have your driver's license suspended or cancelled. To get it back, you will need to provide proof that it is safe for you to drive. You may need to have a formal driving assessment completed at an approved driving assessment centre (There is more information on the next page). This assessment may also determine if you will need to use a modified vehicle.

## Who can drive after a spinal cord injury

Without leg function, you might still be able to drive a modified vehicle. Even with limited hand function, there are adaptations you can use to enable you to drive. Every person with a spinal cord injury has different needs and their situation and abilities will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## Losing your Driver's License

If it becomes unsafe for you to drive, your doctor is required by law to notify licensing agencies (e.g. Ministry of Transportation). Most doctors will tell you this in advance. If you lose your license, you should receive a letter explaining your options.

## Getting your Driver's License Back

To get your driver's license back, you will need to prove that it is safe for you to drive. This is done through an application with the driving agency. It can take many weeks for a decision to be made. If your application is declined, you can appeal the decision. Here's what is needed:

1. Medical report from a doctor
2. Pass a clinical assessment
3. Pass a driving test

**Driving safely:** To drive, you may need to modify a vehicle with hand controls for gas and break.

**Contact your Occupational Therapist for more information.**

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[www.SpinalCordEssentials.ca](http://www.SpinalCordEssentials.ca)

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## Modifying your vehicle

To take a driving test, you might need a modified vehicle. Modified vehicles have hand controls for gas and break, and may be made wheelchair accessible. There is a cost for modifying a vehicle. For more information, check out the [Spinal Cord Essentials Modifying your Vehicle](#) handout.

## Attending a driving school

Driving a modified vehicle takes practice. To get used to driving with hand controls, you can go to a specialized driving school. Driving schools teach you to drive with the modifications and prepare you for the driving test. If you need a modified vehicle for the test, some schools can rent one to you. Try searching the internet for driving schools in your city.

## Driving Assessment

To get your license back, you will need to pass a driving test. This needs to be done at an approved assessment centre. The driving assessment has two parts.

### Clinical assessment (approximately 1.5 – 2 hours)

- Medical and driving history
- Vision, strength, range of motion, sensation, coordination, reaction speed
- Emotional assessment (anxiety, depression, frustration tolerance)
- Cognitive assessment (attention, perception, memory, judgment, insight)
- Equipment review/needs

### Driving test (approximately 45 min – 1.5 hours)

- Driving performance
- Ability to respond to feedback

To find a testing centre in Ontario, visit [www.mto.gov.on.ca](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca). The cost of a driving assessment can be expensive.

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### When to return to driving

Think about your return to driving once your condition is stable. This way, you will know your equipment needs and you can modify your vehicle according to your specific needs.

**Tip:** Be patient, returning to driving can be a long process. Most of the time, this is well worth the effort and helps you be more independent.

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