

**DON'T
DRIVE
UNDER
FIVE**

A QUICK GUIDE:

Diabetes and driving

A practical driver safety guide for people who have:

- » type 1 diabetes
- » type 2 diabetes using insulin or oral glucose-lowering medication
- » gestational diabetes using insulin.

Diabetes can affect your ability to drive safely. The main safety risk is a low blood glucose level (BGL), or hypoglycaemia (hypo).

A hypo can develop quickly and cause:

- » reduced concentration
- » weakness, trembling or shaking
- » light-headedness or dizziness
- » blurred vision
- » headache.

If a hypo is not treated it can cause a loss of consciousness and seizure. These factors increase the risk of road accidents for you and others on the road. To find out how to stay safe while driving, see page 3.



Before driving, it is essential to check your glucose level. If your glucose level is below 5 mmol/L, treat it as shown in steps 1 to 7 on page 3.



People with gestational diabetes who are using insulin should discuss safe blood glucose targets for driving with their diabetes health professional.

Keep yourself and others safe while driving

Hypoglycaemia is the biggest safety concern for the driver and for those around them. It reduces the driver's ability to think and react.

Take steps to avoid a hypo (low blood glucose) event

- » **Check your glucose levels before driving,** and every 2 hours during rest breaks on longer car trips.
- » **Do not miss or delay eating snacks and meals.** If you drive for a long time, stop for regular snack breaks every 2 hours.
- » **Know the signs of a hypo:** If you are driving and feel shaky, sweaty, light-headed, unable to concentrate, or have a headache, pull over immediately, turn off your engine, and check your BGL with a meter. If your BGL is below 5 mmol/L, follow the steps on page 3.
- » **If you use continuous glucose monitoring (CGM), make sure your low glucose and predicted low glucose alarms are on.** Do not drive if:
 - your CGM has an active alert for low glucose level or predicted low glucose level
 - your CGM **or** a finger prick blood glucose finds a level of 5 mmol/L or below.
- » **Always take your meter and strips with you when you get out of the car.** Heat and light can damage them. Check your diabetes and hypo supplies regularly and make sure you have enough to last the car journey. Your doctor or pharmacist can help you.
- » **Manage hypo unawareness:** If you have ongoing hypo unawareness (cannot feel early warning signs of a hypo) you should be under the regular care of a diabetes medical expert (such as an endocrinologist) who can determine your ability to drive safely. Having hypo unawareness increases your risk of having a severe hypo.

Do not drive after a severe hypo event until a diabetes specialist (such as an endocrinologist) has cleared you. A severe hypo is when you are unable to treat the hypo yourself and you need help from someone else. It is a serious road safety risk.

If your symptoms do not match your CGM reading or alarm, confirm your blood glucose level with a finger prick.



Other important driver safety information

- » **Don't drive if you feel unwell and your BGL is above your target range.** High BGLs (or hyperglycaemia) can cause tiredness, blurred vision, and poor decision-making which can affect your driving.
- » **Talk to your health professional about diabetes complications.** If you have a diabetes-related complication, ask your health professional if it affects your ability to drive safely. Some diabetes-related complications can affect your ability to drive safely, such as trouble feeling the pedals due to nerve damage in your feet, or problems seeing clearly due to changes in your vision.
- » **Have regular check-ups with your health professional.** This includes having your HbA1c checked every 3 to 6 months, and your feet and eyes checked at least once every 12 months. Book an appointment with your doctor immediately if you have unexplained, extreme tiredness when driving as it can be a symptom of sleep apnoea (a serious condition that causes breathing to stop during sleep).

What to do if you have hypo symptoms or a BGL below 5 mmol/L while driving



More resources on diabetes and driving

Diabetes and car insurance

If you have any problems with your car insurance, contact the Australian Financial Complaints Authority on **1800 931 678**.

Diabetes and your driver's licence

Conditions may be put on your driver's licence. It is your legal responsibility to tell the Driver Licensing Authority in your state or territory if you take insulin or glucose-lowering medicines.

To find your local Driver Licensing Authority visit Austroads: austroads.com.au/drivers-and-vehicles/assessing-fitness-to-drive/licensing-authority-contacts



Diabetes and assessing your fitness to drive

The national driver medical standards have specific criteria that every driver must meet for safe driving.

To find out more about the national driver medical standards for people living with diabetes, visit Austroads: austroads.com.au/drivers-and-vehicles/assessing-fitness-to-drive

Notes

The NDSS and you

Whether you have just been diagnosed with diabetes, or have been living with diabetes for a while, the NDSS provides a range of support services, information, and subsidised products to help you manage your diabetes, stay healthy and live well. For access to more resources (including translated versions), or to find out more about support services, go to **ndss.com.au** or call the NDSS Helpline on **1800 637 700**.

This information is intended as a guide only. It should not replace individual medical advice and if you have any concerns about your health or further questions, you should contact your health professional.