



# Disabilities, injuries and driving

Many disabled people can get a driver licence, and most people who had a driver licence before their disability can continue to drive.

Vehicle modifications and advances in vehicle technology, like power steering and automatic cars, have helped make this possible.

## Getting your vehicle modified

Modifications you can arrange for private vehicles include:

- steering and secondary control aids
- left-foot accelerators
- clutch conversions
- additional car mirrors
- wheelchair stowage equipment.

Some vehicle modifications must be inspected and certified to make sure they're safe. These include:

- hand controls for braking and accelerating
- handbrake devices
- seatbelt modifications, harnesses and special seating
- joystick and foot steering (you can use a four-way joystick to steer, accelerate and brake)
- infrared remote control systems (you can get in the vehicle and drive from a wheelchair with complete independence).

## Who can modify vehicles

A person with the appropriate skills and experience must do the modification.

A health professional experienced in driver training and an approved low volume vehicle certifier will make sure the vehicle is safe and the modifications meet your needs.

For more information about the vehicle modifications, or who can inspect your vehicle, contact:

**Low Volume Vehicle Technical Association (LVVTA)**  
[www.lvta.org.nz](http://www.lvta.org.nz)

**Ministry of Health**  
[www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

If you're having trouble accessing this information, please ask someone to support you.

## Getting on the road

If you have a physical disability, you should get professional support from a driving assessment service. They can:

- test your driving ability on the road
- give advice on the controls and adaptations you need for access, seating, driving safely and driving comfortably
- evaluate your muscle strength and range of movement.

For support finding your nearest assessment centre, contact:

**Accessible**  
P 0508 001 002  
W [www.accessable.co.nz](http://www.accessable.co.nz)

**Enable New Zealand**  
P 0800 362 253  
W [www.enable.co.nz](http://www.enable.co.nz)

## If you have a medical condition

If you have a medical condition like diabetes, epilepsy, dementia or low vision, or you've had a head injury, heart attack or stroke, you should get advice from your medical advisor.

We have factsheets on most of these conditions. They're available:

- on our website at [www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets)
- at an agent (selected branches of the AA and VTNZ).

## If you have a temporary disability or injury

Disabilities or injuries like broken arms, broken legs or migraines may not stop you from driving, but you need to decide how safe you and other road users will be.

Plaster casts may be uncomfortable and can make it difficult to control a vehicle. You must get guidance from your health practitioner about how the cast will affect your ability to operate all of the vehicle's controls. Your health practitioner could be your doctor (GP), a registered nurse, a nurse practitioner or a specialist if appropriate.

## If you have a progressive disability

Some people have disabilities that gradually develop - often called progressive disabilities. Examples include multiple sclerosis, arthritis, Parkinson's disease, hearing loss and vision loss. These may change your body in ways that affect your ability to drive safely.

It's important you're aware of the effect these conditions may have on your driving. It's dangerous to assume your driving won't be affected.

If you have a progressive disability, you may need to adjust your driving as your body changes. Remember that aging can affect your body and your driving too.

If you take medication, or if your medication changes, you must make sure your driving isn't affected. Get professional medical advice.

## If you've had an amputation

If you've had an amputation, you'll need to get guidance from your health practitioner. They may:

- give you a certificate stating that you should only drive an automatic vehicle and/or that the vehicle should be fitted with special mechanical devices
- refer you to a driving assessment service.

There's usually no difficulty adapting an artificial limb to a vehicle, or a vehicle to a limb.

For more information, contact a driving assessment service.

## If you're deaf or have trouble hearing

You can drive private vehicles.

However, you may need to think about whether you need additional rear-view mirrors. Having side mirrors on both sides of your vehicle can help you see vehicles that use sound and lights to warn drivers of their presence (for example, emergency vehicles).

## If you have low vision

If you've got monocular vision (vision in one eye), you may be able to drive. You need to have a visual field of 140 degrees and 6/12 vision in your good eye. You'll likely have a condition on your driver licence requiring external rear-view mirrors on both sides of your vehicle.

Every driver must pass a standard eyesight test before they can get a driver licence.

### Getting a driver licence

If you're disabled and you want to get your driver licence, you'll still sit the standard theory and practical driving tests.

If you can only drive in a specially-equipped vehicle, you'll sit the test in that vehicle.

We can consider individual cases, and you might be allowed to drive with special conditions.

Unfortunately, some people won't be allowed to drive, for their own safety and other people's safety.

If you apply for driver licence classes 2 to 5 and P, V, I and O endorsements, you'll need special medical, eyesight and hearing examinations.

### Parking concessions

If you're disabled, you may be able to get parking concessions. Contact your local CCS Disability Action branch for more information. Find them online at: [www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/contact](http://www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/contact)

## Mobility scooters and power chairs

Some people use mobility scooters and power chairs (electric wheelchairs) to help them get around.

Most mobility scooters and power chairs are battery powered and have 3 or 4 wheels.

### Laws that apply to mobility scooters and power chairs

Mobility scooters and power chairs are legally defined as wheeled mobility devices.

You don't need a driver licence to use a wheeled mobility device, and they don't need a warrant of fitness or registration. However, there are some important legal safety requirements you need to know about.

- You must operate your mobility scooter or power chair carefully and considerately.
- You must use the footpath, when it's readily accessible, and stay close to the side of the road when a footpath isn't readily accessible.
- When on the footpath, you must not travel at a speed that puts other people in danger.
- It's illegal for you to use, or let any person use, your mobility scooter or power chair in a way that may cause anyone harm.
- If you're involved in a crash, you must stop to see if anyone is injured, help anyone who is injured, and report the crash to the police within 24 hours.

Using a mobility scooter or power chair carelessly has legal consequences.

For example, if you use a wheeled mobility device carelessly, inconsiderately or at a dangerous speed, you could get a fine of up to \$1000.

If you cause a crash where someone is injured or killed, you could be convicted of careless or inconsiderate use of a vehicle, and face a fine of up to \$4500, or up to 3 months in prison.

## Safety hints

Have your mobility scooter, power chair or other device serviced by a qualified service technician regularly. Some manufacturers recommend that mobility scooters and power chairs have a safety check similar to a warrant of fitness every 6 months. This includes getting the brakes, electronics and controls serviced, and the tyre pressure and battery checked.

Remember to always:

- use your mobility scooter or power chair sensibly
- adjust your speed to the conditions
- use a lower speed when turning suddenly or unexpectedly
- plan your travel so you miss peak time pedestrian traffic and places where there could be a lot of people
- keep to the side of the footpath as much as possible, to give pedestrians room to pass you
- keep your speed down when riding on the footpath
- use your indicators, if your vehicle has them (if it doesn't, use hand signals)
- try not to startle pedestrians if you use a warning device (for example, a horn)
- use pedestrian crossings (if you can't find one, avoid travelling over kerbs and don't cross the road without first checking carefully that the way is clear)
- slow down if you're driving in a hazardous area, so you can avoid potential dangers.

There are lots of safety accessories available, like indicators, lights, horns, reversing beepers, warning flags and rear-view mirrors.

For more information about legal requirements for mobility scooters and power chairs, see the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004.

## Where to find out more

Read our booklet *Getting around as a senior*. Get a copy from our website or call us on 0800 822 422.

Go to [www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/getting-around-as-a-senior](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/getting-around-as-a-senior)



This factsheet is a general guide only. It doesn't replace legal advice, and your exact requirements will depend on current legislation.

Make sure you have the most up-to-date version of this factsheet by checking [www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets)

[www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz)

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