

Alcohol and Driving

This is an overview of the driving risks for drivers who misuse alcohol and have alcohol-dependence issues. Full guidelines are published in *Sláinte agus Tiomáint: Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines*.

Alcohol and speed are two leading factors in fatal collisions. Alcohol was shown to be a factor in over 15% of fatal collisions in 2007 (*Review of Pre-crash Behaviour in Fatal Road Collisions Report 1: Alcohol*, RSA Research Department, 2011.)



Be a responsible driver

It is your responsibility as a driver to:

- take any prescribed medication and manage your condition(s);
- tell the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) and your insurance provider of any long-term or permanent injury or illness that may affect your ability to drive safely;
- comply with requirements of your licence as appropriate, including periodic medical reviews;
- get medical advice on your medical fitness to drive if you develop a medical condition during the term of your licence.

Effects of alcohol use on driving

As a driver, you should be aware that alcohol can impair your driving. For example, using alcohol can make you tired and affect your concentration, which reduces your ability to drive safely. You also need to be aware of how long it takes for alcohol to leave the body. Many people underestimate how long it takes and, as a result, their driving may be impaired and/or they may be over the legal limit.

As a general rule, you should allow at least one hour for each unit of alcohol (for example, a glass of beer) to leave the body. However, it may take longer than that, as other factors – such as body size, or how recently you've eaten – can also have an effect.

Never ever drink and drive. Any amount of alcohol impairs your driving.

For further advice and information on alcohol and your health visit:

Health Service Executive:

<http://www.hse.ie/go/alcohol> and or

Alcohol Action Ireland:

<http://alcoholireland.ie>

Road Safety Authority

<http://www.rsa.ie>

Alcohol Misuse

If you misuse alcohol, you may drift into addiction. There is no clear line between misuse and addiction – one fades into the other. If you experience any of the following, then you may be misusing alcohol:

- disturbances of behaviour;
- alcohol-related diseases (liver, stomach, mental health problems, and so on);
- actions that cause you, your family or society harm, now or in the future.

Alcohol Misuse – Driver Responsibilities

Group 1 - Driving a car, motor cycle or tractor

If you are a Group 1 driver, you must inform NDLS if:

- your doctor or other health professional advises you to stop driving because of your persistent alcohol misuse. You must do so until they confirm that you have achieved a minimum period of 3 months controlled drinking or abstinence. This assessment may also include blood tests.

Group 2 - Driving a bus or truck

If you are a Group 2 driver, you must inform NDLS if your doctor or other health professional advises you to stop driving because of your persistent alcohol misuse.

You must do so until they confirm that you have achieved a minimum period of **1 year** controlled drinking or abstinence. This assessment may also include blood tests.

Alcohol dependence

Alcohol dependence is a condition that develops after repeated alcohol use. People who are alcohol-dependent will have experienced three or more of the following symptoms during the past year:

- have a strong desire to drink alcohol,
- have difficulty controlling their use of alcohol,
- persist in using alcohol despite the harmful consequences,
- have an increased tolerance for high levels of alcohol,
- have neglected other pleasures or interests.

Other indicators of alcohol dependence may include a history of tolerance, of detoxification(s) and or alcohol-related fits.

Alcohol Dependence – Driver Responsibilities

Group 1 – Driving a car, motor cycle or tractor

If you are a Group 1 driver, you must inform NDLS if:

- a doctor or other health professional confirms that you have an alcohol dependence. In this case, you must stop driving until your doctor confirms that you have achieved 6 months free from alcohol. This assessment may also include blood tests.

Group 2 – Driving a bus or truck

If you are a Group 2 driver, you must inform NDLS if:

- a doctor or other health professional confirms that you have an alcohol dependence. In this case, you must stop driving until your doctor confirms that you have achieved 3 years free from alcohol. This assessment may also include blood tests. Specialist support may be necessary.

What if I don't feel that my alcohol intake is a problem?

If you disagree with medical opinion, and don't believe you have an alcohol misuse or dependence condition, you can get a second opinion. You must stop driving until this second opinion has been completed.

What will happen if I still drive?

It is important to strike a balance between mobility and safety. If you continue to drive against medical advice, and evidence is found of this, it will affect your insurance, and the NDLS and An Garda Síochána will take action to remove your licence. It is important to remember that driving over the limit is a statutory offence and you will be prosecuted.

How do I inform the NDLS?

If, following consultation with your GP, your medical condition is one that needs to be notified to the NDLS, you need to complete forms (1) and (2) below and return in person to any NDLS centre.

You need to bring:

- 1) a completed Driver Licence Application Form;
- 2) a Medical Report Form (D501) **completed by your doctor** (a letter from your doctor is not accepted);
- 3) proof of your PPSN; and
- 4) your current licence.

You will then, within a specified time frame, be issued with a new, updated licence.

Please see **www.ndls.ie** for locations/bookings and forms.

If you have more questions, please email **medicalfitness@rsa.ie** or telephone **1890 40 60 40**.

Please note if you have supplied a medical report form to obtain existing licence/permit (101 notation on licence/permit) **and** terms of licence/permit are not being altered, you may submit your new application together with your medical report form by post to:

Medical Fitness – Driver Licensing,
Road Safety Authority,
Primrose Hill,
Ballina,
Co. Mayo.

Further information sources:

- **Your GP or nurse or counsellor** – will advise you on the next steps, and direct you on how to seek help.
- **HSE Alcohol & Drugs Helpline 1800 459 459**
This helpline is open Mon – Fri 10am-5pm.

Email: drugshiv@hse.ie

(You will receive a reply within 3 working days.)

Web: www.drugs.ie

Everyone can choose never to drink and drive. You can help yourself and others by remembering the following advice:

- Before drinking in a group, choose a designated driver – a non-drinking driver.
- If you're out drinking, get a lift home with a non-drinking driver, or call a taxi.
- Don't let friends drink and drive.
- Choose not to binge drink yourself, and help others not to do it.



National Driver Licence Service



Plain English
Approved by NALA

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