

Return to Driving

Driving is a symbol of independence and an important part of our integration into the community.

It gives us a sense of freedom and control, and allows easy access to employment, school, shopping, social connections and healthcare. Because we tend to take our driving skills for granted, it is easy to forget that driving is one of the most complex and dangerous things that we do on a daily basis. A brain injury, even a mild one, can impact the skills that are critical for safe operation of a vehicle, such as:

- Memory functioning, such as recalling directions
- Keeping concentration for long durations
- Paying attention to surroundings
- Problem solving skills
- Safety judgment and awareness
- Ability to maintain speed and lane position
- Eye-hand coordination
- Reaction time
- Having accurate vision and perceptual skills

Because of the impact that a brain injury can have on the skills needed to safely drive, it is critical that your readiness to return to driving be assessed by medical professionals. If you are receiving therapy, your therapist(s) will help evaluate your ability to drive and may have you participate in activities to work toward this goal. Your physician is the professional who would refer you for a driving evaluation or additional therapy, if needed.

Driving evaluations are completed by a Certified Driving Rehab Specialist (CDRS) and include a behind-the-wheel assessment. Please visit the Association for Driver Rehabilitation at www.driver-ed.org for a list of certified professionals. Your physician will make the final determination as to whether you can return to driving or if any restrictions and/or vehicle modifications are needed. It is recommended that you do not drive or practice driving until you have successfully completed a driving evaluation.

There may be other transportation options if you are not able to drive, such as having family or friends drive you or using public transportation. Some communities provide public transportation specifically for individuals with disabilities. An occupational therapist can help you explore these alternative transportation options.

You can read more information about driving after brain injury provided by Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems at: <http://www.msctc.org/tbi/factsheets/Driving-After-Traumatic-Brain-Injury>