

DRIVING AND DIABETES

For anyone who is planning to get their driver's licence, it is important to remember that *driving is not a right, but a privilege*. All people who intend to drive must prove that they will be responsible behind the wheel. When you have diabetes, you have to make sure that your diabetes is well managed and take certain precautions when you drive.

Getting Your Licence

Once you pass your learner's (Class 7L) driver's licence written exam, you need to obtain a blue *Driver's Medical Examination Report* form (MV2011D) from your local ICBC Driver Licensing Office. The form needs to be completed and signed by your endocrinologist, before you are able to get your novice (Class 7N) licence. **Don't leave the ICBC office without the form!** You will receive a follow-up medical examination form in the mail one year later, to re-assess your diabetes and to establish a baseline for future medical examinations. If your doctor feels that everything is OK, you will then be asked to submit a medical examination form every 5 years with your driver's renewal letter, as long as your diabetes remains stable. Each time, you must show that your diabetes is under control by doing the following:

- Check your blood sugars at least 2-3 times per day and record the results in a logbook.
- Be aware of hypoglycemic reactions (low blood sugars) and always carry some form of fast-acting sugar on your person to quickly treat a low.
- Take your insulin as directed by your endocrinologist.
- Wear ID that says DIABETES on it.
- Ensure that you have not had a severe hypoglycemic reaction (i.e. a low resulting in a seizure, use of glucagon, or requiring assistance from another person) within the past 18 months.
- Notify the MVB of any severe hypoglycemic episodes or worsening of your medical condition.
- Have a recent A1C result that is below 9% (which means that your average blood sugars over the past 2-3 months have been averaging less than 11.7 mmol/L).

If you want to mail your *Driver's Medical Examination* form to the clinic for your physician to fill out, please make sure that you have signed and dated the form at the bottom left corner; otherwise, we will have to return it to you. Do NOT fax us the form, it doesn't transmit well.

Online Resources:

- The BC OSMV has made up a factsheet for *Drivers with Diabetes and Hypoglycemia for Class 5-8 Licenses*, which is available at:
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/publications/factsheets/diabetics5-8.pdf.
- The official *BC Guide for Physicians in Determining Fitness to Drive a Motor Vehicle* can be downloaded at:
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/publications/docs/2010-guide-in-determining-fitness-to-drive.pdf.
- The Canadian Diabetes Association's *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Diabetes and Private and Commercial Driving* can be downloaded at:
www.diabetes.ca/files/DrivingGuidelinesBeggJune03.pdf.

Precautions While Driving

Diabetes is a condition that has the potential to make driving unsafe. High blood sugars (above 17 mmol/L) can make you feel tired and unwell, so you should not drive until your blood sugars are under control. Hypoglycemia is your greatest risk when driving, because low blood sugars can impair your judgement and driving skills **for up to 45-60 minutes**. Take the following precautions when driving:

- Check your blood sugar prior to driving and (if on a long trip) every two hours thereafter.
- **If you're under 5, don't drive!** The act of driving can actually lower your blood sugars. If your blood sugars are below 5 mmol/L treat with fast-acting glucose (glucose tablets or juice) followed by a snack prior to driving.
- Always have a source of rapid-acting glucose **within easy reach** (e.g. attached to the visor) while driving. In addition, keep your blood glucose monitor with you in the car, along with plenty of snacks in the glove compartment.
- If you feel like you're having a low blood sugar while driving, **immediately** stop driving and treat with fast-acting glucose followed by a snack. Resume driving only when your blood sugars have returned to normal (above 5 mmol/L) and you have waited 45-60 minutes.
- Always wear your diabetes ID when driving.

Please note that the criteria for obtaining a commercial driver's license are even stricter. For further information, go to the website of the Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles at www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/.