

The Driver Evaluation Program: Frequently Asked Questions

A driver evaluation is an assessment of your driving skills by an occupational therapist (OT). The Driver Evaluation Program is part of Nova Scotia Health. **It is not part of the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV).**

Why have I been referred for a driver evaluation?

- Changes in your health can affect your ability to drive safely. Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) will decide if your health changes have affected your driving skills.
- They may do tests in their office to decide if it is safe for you to drive. They may also refer you to the Driver Evaluation Program.
- After your evaluation, we will send a report to your primary health care provider.

What happens during the driver evaluation?

You will be assessed by:

- An occupational therapist who has training in driver evaluation.
- A certified driving instructor

The evaluation has 2 parts.

Part 1: Clinical assessment

- Our team will assess the skills you use to drive, like:
 - › Reaction time for braking
 - › Strength
 - › Movement
 - › The way your brain uses information from your senses (like vision)
- We will also ask about your driving habits and the types of driving you do. This information will help us understand how your health changes may be affecting you.

Part 2: On-road assessment

- You will drive with the OT and a driving instructor.

I never drive in the city. Can the evaluation be done in my community?

- Evaluations are only done in Halifax.
- There are 2 driving routes:
 - › One is for people who usually drive in the city
 - › One is for people who usually drive in rural areas
- **You do not need to know your way around the city.** The instructor will give you easy-to-follow directions, like:
 - › “Turn right at the next corner.”
 - or
 - › “Turn left at the lights.”

Will I use a driving simulator?

- No. The best way to assess if your health changes are affecting your driving is by driving. This is why we assess you on-road.

Why do I have to pay a fee?

- The program is not covered by Nova Scotia Health, provincial health insurance (MSI), or Pharmacare.
- The fee covers the cost of running the program. All provinces in Canada charge for this service.

Is the fee covered by my insurance?

- Private health insurance may cover some or all of the cost.
- Ask your insurance provider if your plan covers private occupational therapy.
- If your plan covers private occupational therapy up to a certain amount for each visit, the assessment can be done over 4 visits so you can get the most coverage. **Please tell us if you would like to do this when we call to book your appointment.**

Can I claim the cost of the program as a health expense on my income tax?

- Yes. You can claim any part of the cost that you pay as a health expense.

Can I use my own car?

- No. For safety reasons, the evaluation must be done in a 2-brake car. There is a brake pedal on the passenger side for the instructor to use, if needed. We will provide a car with an automatic transmission. Use of the car is included in the evaluation fee.

Can I practice before the evaluation?

- **We recommend that you DO NOT practice before your evaluation.**
- The on-road assessment is not a pass-or-fail test, like an RMV road test. We are not trying to learn if you are a good driver. **We are trying to learn if your health changes are affecting your driving.**
- The OTs are trained to tell the difference between driving concerns related to health issues and your usual driving habits.
- If you have a habit that may cause you to lose points on an RMV road test, we will tell you what you are doing and how to correct it. If you can correct the habit with instruction, we do not usually consider it a problem.

Where will you send the results?

- We will send a report to your primary health care provider, and it will be part of your health record. **We will not send the report to the RMV unless you have given us written permission to do so.**

What if my license is suspended?

- You must have a license for the on-road assessment. This can be:
 - › A regular license
 - › A learner's license
 - › A temporary license

If you got a letter from the RMV that says your license has been suspended:

- › **Please tell us when we call to book your appointment.** We will arrange for a temporary license through the RMV for the evaluation.

What if I have never had a license?

- We can assess you even if you have not yet applied for a learner's license. Your primary health care provider may want you to be assessed before you apply for a license for adaptations (special equipment to help you drive), or to make sure you are able to drive safely.
- If you have never had a license, we will only book you for a clinical assessment. We will book your on-road assessment after you have a learner's license.

I cannot drive a regular car. How can I do the evaluation?

- The car has some of the most common adaptations installed. These include:
 - › Hand controls
 - › Steering aids (like a spinner knob)
 - › A left-foot gas pedal

What will happen if I do not come for the evaluation?

- If you do not come for your evaluation, we will let your primary health care provider know. Your primary health care provider has referred you for this evaluation because they are concerned that your health changes may be affecting your driving.
 - › Your primary health care provider may tell the RMV about their concerns. The RMV will send you a letter and may suspend your driver's license.

How long is the waitlist?

- There may be a wait for service. Appointments are booked based on the information your primary health care provider has given.
- If you feel that you need to be seen sooner, please contact:

The Driver Evaluation Program

Nova Scotia Rehabilitation and Arthritis Centre, 1st floor
1341 Summer Street
Halifax, NS B3H 4K4
Phone: 902-473-1158
Fax: 902-473-1321

For more information:

- › Phone: 902-473-1158
or
- › Visit www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/driver-evaluation-program

Scan the QR code on your smartphone (open the camera on your smartphone, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears)



If you have any questions or need to tell us that your license has been suspended, please call the Driver Evaluation Program:

- › **902-473-1158**

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

*Prepared by: The Driver Evaluation Program
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*