

Driver Evaluation Program: Frequently Asked Questions

Why have I been referred for a Driver Evaluation?

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

Changes in your health can affect your ability to drive safely. Doctors in Nova Scotia are responsible for deciding if someone who has had changes in their health should be driving. They may do tests in their office to decide if it's safe for you to drive. They may need to refer you for a comprehensive driver evaluation, if they're not sure if it's safe for you to drive. Once the evaluation is complete, we will send a report to your doctor.

What happens during a Driver Evaluation?

The evaluation has two parts:

- Clinical Evaluation

This involves testing your physical abilities and thinking skills as they relate to driving. We will check your strength, movement, reaction time for emergency braking, concentration, and the way your brain uses vision and other information. We will also gather information about your driving habits and the type of driving you do. This information will help the occupational therapist understand how your health issues may be affecting you.

- On-road Evaluation:

You will drive with the occupational therapist and a driving instructor.

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

At this time, evaluations can only be done in Halifax. We have two routes: one for people who usually drive in the city and one for people who usually drive in rural areas. You do not need to know your way around the city. The driving instructor will give you easy-to-follow directions, such as “turn right at the next corner” or “turn left at the lights”.

Will I use a driving simulator?

The Driver Evaluation Program has a driving simulator. It is most often used for trying out adaptations such as hand controls. The best way to determine if changes in your health are affecting your driving is by driving. Therefore, all clients are assessed on-road in a driver evaluation car.

Why do I have to pay a fee?

The cost of your evaluation is not covered by Nova Scotia Health Authority, MSI or Pharmacare. The fee covers the cost of operating the program. All provinces in Canada charge for this service.

Is the fee covered by my insurance?

If you have private health insurance, it may cover some or all of the cost of the Program. If your plan covers private occupational therapy, it may cover this evaluation. Please contact your insurance company to ask if your plan covers occupational therapy. If your plan covers occupational therapy up to a certain amount per visit, the assessment can be done over 4 visits in order to maximize your coverage. Please mention this when we call you 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.

Who will evaluate me?

The evaluation will be completed by occupational therapists who have passed the Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) exam through the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED).

Can I use my own car?

No. For safety reasons the evaluation must be done in a driver training car with a dual brake. We will provide a vehicle with an automatic transmission. Use of the vehicle is included in your fee.

Can I practice before the evaluation?

We recommend that you **DO NOT** practice before your evaluation. We are not assessing whether you are a good driver. We are assessing whether your health issues are causing changes in your driving. The occupational therapists are trained to separate driving concerns related to health issues from driving habits. The on-road evaluation is not a pass/fail test based on points like an RMV road test. 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 don't usually consider it a problem.

Where will you send the report?

We will send the report to your doctor and it will become 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 to complete the on-road evaluation. This can be a regular license, temporary license or learner's license. If you have received a letter from the RMV stating that your license has been suspended, please tell us when we call you to book your appointment. We can arrange for a temporary license through the RMV for the evaluation.

What if I have never had a license?

We do assess people who have not yet applied for their learner's license. Their doctor may want them to be assessed for adaptive aids or to make sure they are a safe driving candidate, before they apply for a license. In this case, you will only be booked for a clinical evaluation. An on-road evaluation will be booked after you have a learner's license.

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

There are adaptations available for people who are not able to drive a regular car. These may be simple or advanced. The Driver Evaluation Program car is an automatic transmission vehicle equipped with the most common adaptations for trial. These include hand controls, a left foot accelerator, and steering aids such as a spinner knob.

