



Patient & Family Guide
2023

Driving After Vision Loss



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Driving After Vision Loss

Driving is important for many people. It can help you do your daily activities and take part in your community.

If you drive, it is important to make sure you can do so safely. This protects yourself and others from accidents, injuries, or death.

Some health problems (like vision loss) can affect your driving. **If you have vision loss, talk with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about your driving.**

Your vision must meet certain standards for you to have a driver's licence in Nova Scotia. Your primary health care provider may want to test your vision to see if it is still safe for you to drive.

These tests may include:

Visual acuity

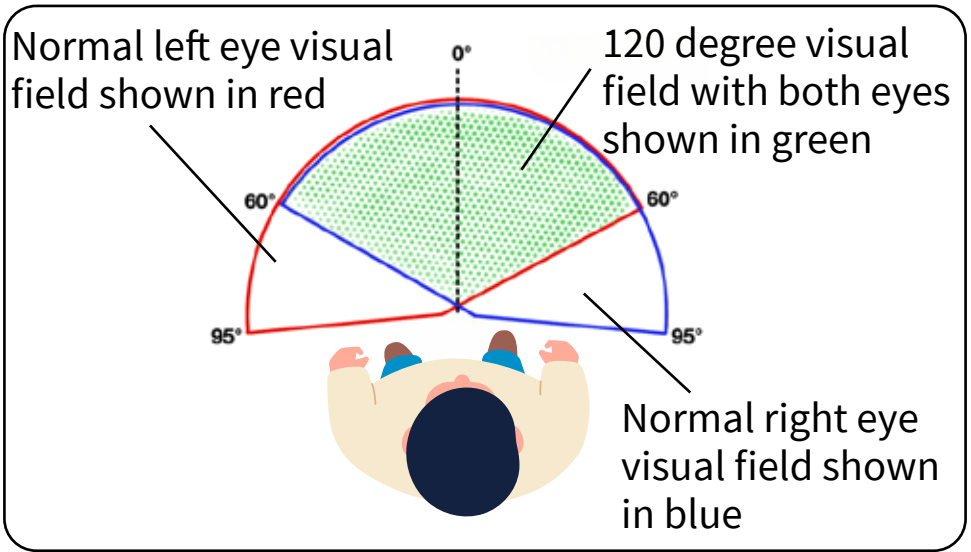
- This test measures how well you can focus on an object (like a road sign).
- The Snellen eye chart is a tool used to measure visual acuity.
- During the test, you will cover 1 eye with your hand or with a small paddle. You will be asked to read the letters on the chart with your other eye. The letters on the chart get smaller every few lines.
 - › You will repeat the test with your other eye. Each eye can have a different visual acuity.
 - › Visual acuity test results are written as a fraction (like 20/20 or 20/40).
 - › The first number is the distance between you and the eye chart. It is always 20 feet.
 - › The second number measures your vision compared to perfect vision. It refers to how far from the eye chart a person with perfect vision would have to stand to see what you see at 20 feet.

- › A score of 20/40 means that what you can see clearly from 20 feet away, a person with perfect vision can see clearly from 40 feet away.
- › A score of 20/20 means that what you can see clearly from 20 feet, a person with perfect vision can also see clearly from 20 feet.

Visual field

- Your visual field is how far you can see in each direction (left, right, up, and down) while looking straight ahead and not moving your eyes.
 - › If you are looking directly at something, you are using your central vision.
 - › When you see things on either side that are not directly in your line of sight, you are using your peripheral vision.

- Your visual field can be measured in both eyes at the same time or in one eye at a time.



Double vision (also called diplopia)

- Double vision is when you see 2 of something when there is only 1. It can affect 1 or both eyes.
- Diplopia can happen for different reasons (like a stroke). Your treatment will depend on the cause of your diplopia.

Nova Scotia vision standards

To get and keep a license to drive a car, a car with a trailer, a motorcycle, a pick-up truck, a van, or a farm tractor, you must have:

- › Visual acuity of at least 20/40 in 1 eye, with or without glasses or contact lenses
- › Field of vision of at least 120 degrees with both eyes open and examined together
- › No double vision

To get and keep a license to drive a semi trailer, a tractor trailer, a bus, a small bus or van for compensation (for money), a taxi, or an ambulance, you must have:

- › Vision in both eyes
- › Visual acuity of at least 20/50 in 1 eye and 20/30 or in your other eye, with or without glasses or contact lenses
- › Field of vision of at least 120 degrees in each eye, examined separately
- › No double vision

Can I still drive if I have had vision loss?

- If you have recently had vision loss, you must follow your primary health care provider's directions before you start driving again.
- You may need to have an eye exam with an optometrist (eye doctor), or an ophthalmologist (eye surgeon). In Nova Scotia:
 - › Optometrists are required to share your exam results with the Registry of Motor Vehicles.
 - › Ophthalmologists may choose to share your results with the Registry of Motor Vehicles, but they are not required to.

- The Registry of Motor Vehicles is responsible for making decisions about a person's ability to keep their driver's license.
 - › The Registry of Motor Vehicles or your primary health care provider may refer you to a driver's rehabilitation program for a driving assessment.
- Your vision is only 1 part of your driving ability. Your driving ability can also be affected by:
 - › other health conditions
 - › cognitive function (thinking, learning, memory, decision making, problem solving, paying attention)
- Your optometrist may recommend that you visit your primary health care provider to fill out medical forms after you have had any vision loss.

Vision requirements for driving in Nova Scotia:

There are several different classes of licences in Nova Scotia:

- Class 5 is the most common and is used for driving cars, pick-up trucks, and vans with a seat capacity of less than 24.
- Class 7 is a learner's licence required before acquiring a class 5 licence.
- Class 3 and 8 are for driving vehicle-trailer combinations and farm trucks.
- Class 1, 2, and 4 are for driving semi-trailers, larger vehicles, taxis, and ambulances and because of this have higher vision standards.

Vision standards for class 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8:

- Visual acuity of at least 20/40 in one eye, with or without glasses or contact lenses
- No double vision (diplopia)
- Field of vision of at least 120 degrees with both eyes open and examined together

Vision standards for Class 1, 2, or 4:

- Vision in both eyes:
 - › Visual acuity of at least 20/50 in one eye and 20/30 in the other eye, with or without glasses or contact lenses
- No double vision (diplopia)
- Field of vision of at least 120 degrees in each eye, examined separately

For more information, visit:

- › <https://novascotia.ca/sns/paal/ndxrmv.asp>

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.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.