



**waikanaehealth**



WAIKANAE HEALTH CENTRE

# **DRIVERS MEDICAL EXAMINATION**

**For those over the age of 80**

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency requires renewal of driving licences when we turn 75, 80, and every two years thereafter.

The information below is applicable if you are turning 80 years of age, or older.

Our ability to drive safely decreases over time. Older age in itself is not a contra-indication to driving, however medical conditions may affect how safely we perform this function.

Your doctor/nurse practitioner is legally bound by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency to ensure you are fit to drive safely. Driving is not a right, and a balance must be struck between the quality of life of you as a driver, and keeping both you and other road users safe.

Renewing your licence includes getting a medical certificate from a doctor/nurse practitioner that knows you best. The process involves both a nurse and doctor/nurse practitioner appointment that are approx. 3-4 weeks apart. Our team will be in touch to book these appointments with you, approximately 2 months prior to your upcoming birthday. Please do not call us for an appointment, unless you have not heard from us within 4 weeks of your birthday.





## WHAT IS THE COST OF A DRIVERS MEDICAL?

Unlike a standard doctor/nurse practitioner consultation, the costs in obtaining a driver medical certificate is not funded by any government subsidy. Effective now, the cost is \$130 which is made up of a \$30 fee for a nurse assessment and \$100 for a doctor/nurse practitioner's assessment.






# MEDICAL ASSESSMENT APPOINTMENT

When you turn 80, and in subsequent years, securing a driving medical certificate is a two-part assessment:

You will first meet with a nurse who will complete the following tests (you are welcome to bring a family member or support person with you) -

-  An assessment of your memory, concentration and ability to think clearly. This assessment takes about 15 minutes. Bring you glasses (both reading and/or driving) to your nurse appointment.
-  You may also be asked questions about your driving & sleep habits, and alcohol consumption.

You will then need to meet with your doctor/nurse practitioner.  
Your doctor/nurse practitioner will -

-  Review of your memory/concentration test results;
-  Check your mobility, coordination and reactions;
-  Perform a physical and eyesight examination;
-  Review your current medications and medical history; and
-  Ask any other health related questions that may be needed.

If you are under the care of an eye specialist, you will need to bring with you an eye-sight certificate from them (this is important if you suffer from glaucoma and cataracts, or if you only have vision in one eye). If you wear glasses for driving but are not under specialist care, we suggest you see your optometrist for a checkup. They can complete a form for us to review and for you to take with you to AA when you are renewing your licence, which will cut out the requirement for an eye-test at AA. Note: this checkup needs to be within 60 days of your birthday to be valid).

Please bring your glasses (both reading and/or driving) to your doctor/nurse practitioner appointment.

*Note that Class 2-5 licences (Trucks and heavy vehicles) and P (Passenger) and FTWR endorsements have more stringent requirements than Class 1 (Light motor vehicles) Maintaining some of these licences may require specialist sign-off if you suffer from certain conditions.*



## OUTCOME OF THE ASSESSMENT

You will either be deemed:

1. Completely fit to continue driving; or
2. Completely fit to continue driving with restrictions (eg no night-time driving, or limited to a certain radius, e.g. locally only) or for a limited time duration (eg six or 12 months); or
3. In need of further assessment; or
4. Unfit to continue driving.

If there are any aspects of this medical that we are concerned about, we will discuss your options. We may refer you to an optometrist or for an on-road driving test, either with the AA or with an Occupational Therapist skilled at driving assessment. Please be aware there may be additional costs involved.

**Continuing to drive without a valid license is an offence under the Land Transport Act, and your doctor/nurse practitioner is legally bound to inform Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency if they become aware of this.**



## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU FAIL THE MEDICAL OR NEED FURTHER ASSESSMENT?

If the examination reveals medical conditions that need further assessment to determine your fitness to drive, your doctor/nurse practitioner will inform you on





## A MEMORY TEST INDICATING MEMORY PROBLEMS

At 75 years of age, we do not automatically require you to do a memory test, however your doctor/nurse practitioner may refer you for a SIMARD should he/she feel it is appropriate. Driving is a very complicated process and requires full engagement of our higher functions (cognition). We are often able to manage the mechanics of driving quite easily, but that does not necessarily make us a safe driver. We must be able to react quickly, safely and effectively to situations that may occur on the road.

More information on SIMARD can be found on page 6.



**Minor memory/cognition problems:** A borderline screening test will indicate to your doctor that something may be amiss with your memory. It may not be significant enough to stop you from driving. You may be referred to a specialist driving occupational therapist (OT) for an assessment.



**More significant memory/cognition problems:** Should the OT assessor deem you are not fit to drive, your doctor will not renew your medical certificate. If you have a low score on the screening test, this would indicate a high likelihood of failing the OT driving assessment.

Your doctor/nurse practitioner is legally obliged to inform Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency of failed OT assessments and if you should refuse to undertake the recommended test. You may simply accept that your driver's licence has lapsed, and not seek to renew it at this point.



## OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS FOR FAILING THE DRIVING ASSESSMENT AND/OR SPECIALIST CLEARANCE REQUIRED

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has a list of conditions that are incompatible with the safe operation of motor vehicles on NZ roads. These include certain neurological conditions like Strokes, Recurrent TIAs, Epilepsy, Loss of Consciousness, Neuromuscular disorders, including Parkinson's disease, Dementia and other memory impairment; shortly following heart attack, irregular heartbeat, severe high blood pressure, heart failure and cardiomyopathy, uncontrolled diabetes and certain mental health conditions, among a number of other conditions. Improving symptoms or impairment could result in a return to/continuation of driving, and in certain conditions a specialist's clearance is required.






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## WHAT OPTIONS DO YOU HAVE IF YOUR DOCTOR/NURSE PRACTITIONER FAILS YOUR MEDICAL CERTIFICATE?

-  You are entitled to a second opinion from another doctor/nurse practitioner in this practice who has access to your health records, or another doctor outside of our practice. The usual (non-subsidised) fee would apply. Please note that failing to disclose your pre-existing medical conditions or a failed cognitive screening test to such a doctor is an offence under the Land Transport Act, and is punishable by law (Using a document by deceit). As doctors/nurse practitioners we are bound to report such acts to Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency should we become aware of such a failure to disclose.
-  You may seek an opinion from a specialist in the field that affects your ability to meet the standard (E.g. Cardiologist, Psychiatrist or Geriatrician). These assessments may not be provided by the public health sector.
-  There are many transport options available should you be medically unfit to drive, including mobility scooters and power chairs, vehicle modifications and lottery grants, the Total Mobility Taxi scheme, and subsidised off-peak public transport. We are able to advise you on what options may suit you best.

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## INFORMATION ON SIMARD

### (Screen for the Identification of the Cognitively Impaired Medically At Risk Driver)

<https://www.nzgp-webdirectory.co.nz/site/nzgp-webdirectory2/SIMARD-administration-info.pdf>

We fully understand and appreciate the anxiety and stress caused to anyone who is having their memory and concentration tested, no matter what age they are. Clinicians are required to assess cognitive function as part of the driving assessment for older drivers (as per the Waka Kotahi publication Medical aspects of fitness to drive).

It is important to note that a SIMARD is only a screening tool for our doctors/nurse practitioners. You do not have to score 100% to pass. The test has a maximum of 130 points. We use the following scoring matrix to determine whether you need further assessment or not –

#### **Above 70 points (out of 130)**

This means you have a high probability of passing a driving assessment. In this case, all you need to do is attend your pre-booked appointment with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

#### **Between 31 and 70 (out of 130)**

This means your doctor or nurse practitioner will be unable to pass you to continue driving until you have been for further assessment with an occupational therapist (OT) who specialises in assessing people for driving with regard to memory.

Local assessors are:

Meiny Erasmus

Email for appointment: [meiny@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:meiny@yahoo.co.nz) | Phone: 027 467 8575

Kevin O'Leary & Associates

Email for appointment: [info@otrs.co.nz](mailto:info@otrs.co.nz) | Phone: 07 838 0153

#### **Below 30 (out of 130)**

This means you are having problems with your memory or cognition and it is unlikely you will be able to continue driving. Please attend the booking you already have with the doctor or nurse practitioner to discuss this further. We encourage you to bring a family member with you.

Your appointment is with:

**Nurse:**

Date:

Time:

**Doctor:**

Date:

Time:

CONTACT US

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