



### Further information

*Dementia and Driving.* New Zealand Transport Agency. [www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets)

*Driving and strong medications for pain control.* New Zealand Pain Society. [www.nzps.org.nz/public-resources](http://www.nzps.org.nz/public-resources)

*Cognitive Impairment and Dementia Health Pathways.* [3d.healthpathways.org.nz](http://3d.healthpathways.org.nz)



*Our namesake  
The Venerable Mary Potter*

For further information, or to make a donation,  
please see our website:

[www.marypotter.org.nz](http://www.marypotter.org.nz)

*Remember driving is  
a responsibility and a  
privilege, not a right*

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## Driving Considerations

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Driving requires effective and reliable control of a vehicle at all times:

Many skills are required to drive safely.

They include but are not limited to:

- Good vision in the front and out of the corners of the eyes
- Quick and strong reactions
- Good coordination between eyes, hands and legs
- The ability to make decisions quickly
- The ability to make judgements about what is happening on the road.

Some conditions, such as a brain tumour or an epileptic seizure can automatically disqualify a driver. For many patients, it is a matter of judging when you are safe.

## Medication

Medication can affect your ability to drive. Opioids such as oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl and methadone can be particularly dangerous while doses are adjusted.

Taking opioids for medical reasons does not automatically disqualify you from driving but the following advice should be considered:

- Do not drive for at least two days and preferably five days after starting or increasing an opioid.
- Check fitness to drive by taking a trusted passenger and driving for 10-15 minutes on quiet roads.
- Inform your insurance company. If this is not done you may find that the insurance is not valid.

## Other times to avoid driving

There will be other times when you must not drive, these include:

- If you feel drowsy
- If you are feeling extreme fatigue/stress
- If you have drunk alcohol
- If you start taking other drugs prescribed by your doctor or brought from a chemist that may cause drowsiness, for example hay-fever medicines.

Or, anything which makes you less able to make a sudden emergency stop with your vehicle.

If you have any further questions concerning driving and medication please discuss with your doctor or a Mary Potter Hospice staff member.

## Warning signs

- Driving too slowly
- Confusion when stopping and changing lanes
- Becoming lost on a route
- Ignoring traffic lights and signs
- Not being able to make sound judgements about what is happening on the road.

## What can I or others do if I am finding it difficult to drive

You must seek help. Speak to your doctor at Mary Potter Hospice or your GP. The doctor may carry out a specific pen and paper test and discuss your ability to drive with the multidisciplinary team.

If they are uncertain about your ability to drive they must inform you and encourage you to undertake a specialist occupational therapist (OT) driving assessment. Unfortunately this is not funded in the Wellington Region and costs between \$200-\$500.

If the doctor remains undecided then all the assessments/reports/information can be sent to the NZTA Chief Medical Officer to decide. In all situations the doctor must decide whether the client can drive while awaiting assessment and if not inform the NZTA.

Also Age Concern Wellington offers classroom based Staying Safe Driving Courses. Contact [communitysup@acwellington.org.nz](mailto:communitysup@acwellington.org.nz)

## Alternatives to driving

If you are advised not to drive you may feel a sense of loss of self esteem and independence. You may also feel angry and frustrated.

There is support available from the counselling service at Mary Potter Hospice and there are also some alternatives to driving which you may be eligible for. These include:

### **Total Mobility Scheme:**

This assists eligible people with subsidised door-to-door transport services wherever scheme transport providers operate. With a Total Mobility smart card transport can be discounted up to 50% up to a maximum of \$40 per trip.

Further information can be found on:

[www.gw.govt.nz/total-mobility/](http://www.gw.govt.nz/total-mobility/)

or from your Mary Potter Hospice Occupational Therapist.

### **The mobility parking permit scheme:**

This supports people with a medical condition or disability to get out into their communities.

This scheme enables the holder to park in designated mobility parking spaces, and park for longer in Council-managed parking spaces.

This form is available from a Mary Potter Hospice Social Worker or OT, or

[www.MobilityParking.org.nz](http://www.MobilityParking.org.nz) and can be completed by your Mary Potter Hospice doctor or GP.