

One of the biggest moments that teens look forward to is finally getting a driver's license. For most teenagers, driving represents freedom and control. For some, driving is important economically--- some need to drive to get to and from work or to school and school activities. Teens with diabetes should have no problem getting their license in most states (that is, if you can pass your driving test!) Because of the danger of driving with hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia, you will be required to submit a written report from your doctor that your diabetes is in relatively good control. Driving an automobile is a privilege, not a right, and it can be taken away from you. Anyone with a medical condition (such as diabetes) that might interfere with safe driving should take all precautions to avoid dangerous situations.

How can diabetes affect my driving?

- In the short term, diabetes can make your glucose (sugar) levels too high or too low. As a result, diabetes can make you:
 1. Feel sleepy or dizzy
 2. Feel confused which may affect your reaction time
 3. Have blurred vision
 4. Lose consciousness or have a seizure
- In the long run, diabetes, if not well-controlled, can lead to problems that affect driving. Diabetes may cause nerve damage in your hands, legs and feet, or eyes.

How should I prepare for getting my license?

- Getting your license indicates that you are willing to accept responsibility for your own safety as well as the safety of everyone else on the highway while driving.
- Show evidence that you are monitoring your blood sugars 3 to 4 times a day and recheck your blood glucose when you are low or extremely high.
- Make sure that you wear *Medic Alert* jewelry indicating that you have diabetes.
- Have a plan for carrying a fast-acting carbohydrate in your car. Know how to responsibly treat low blood sugars prior to or while driving.

- Talk to your health care team if you have a history of very high glucose levels or a history of severe lows to determine at what point such levels might affect your ability to be a safe driver. Have your health care provider help you develop a plan to improve your diabetes control.

What can I do to ensure that I can drive safely with diabetes?

- Check your blood sugar level before getting in the car. If it is low, treat the hypoglycemia and wait until you are at a safer level (i.e. 100) before driving. It is especially important to check before getting into the car if you don't always feel the symptoms of hypoglycemia.
- Keep your car console (right next to the driver's seat) stocked with glucose tablets and snacks of fast-acting carbohydrates so that you can treat quickly before symptoms of hypoglycemia become more severe. You never know when there may be stalled traffic due to an accident or a long line at the fast food drive-through making it difficult to get something to treat the low blood sugar.
- In some situations, high blood glucose levels (hyperglycemia) also may affect driving by causing blurry vision or affecting your reaction time. It is important that your overall blood glucose control is adequate to prevent these types of problems.
- **Always wear your seat belt** when you are driving or riding in a car. Make sure that everyone riding with you is also buckled up.