

Overview of the NSW Alcohol Interlock Program

- Alcohol interlock devices are now mandatory for people convicted of high range (blood alcohol concentration of 0.15 or higher), repeat and other serious drink driving offences in NSW.
- An interlock is an electronic breath testing device linked to a vehicle's ignition system. Program participants must provide a breath sample that the interlock analyses for the presence of alcohol. If a positive sample is detected, the vehicle will not start.
- The program puts participants in contact with their GP at up to three different stages of the program to help them with their drinking behaviour:
 1. Before they enter the program
 2. During the program
 3. Towards the end of the program.

This information sheet relates to **Stage 3**. The involvement of GPs is essential to support the rehabilitative opportunities of the program.

For more information on the NSW Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program, including a Fact Sheet for Medical Practitioners, visit rms.nsw.gov.au/interlock or call Service NSW on 13 22 13.

Why is this patient attending for an assessment?

This patient is currently in the last six months of the interlock program, and their interlock has detected attempts to drive after drinking alcohol.

As a result, Roads and Maritime Services requires that the patient's fitness to drive be assessed.

How do I assess fitness to drive in relation to drinking?

- The **Checklist: Assessing Fitness to Drive in relation to alcohol use** (see next page) can help you to consider:
 - Alcohol dependence, which is linked to the risk of repeat drink driving
 - The letter to the patient from Roads and Maritime which lists your patient's attempts to drink and drive provides additional, objective information for your assessment. The patient must provide you with this letter.
 - Complications of heavy drinking which may impair the patient's fitness to drive e.g. seizures; cognitive impairment; encephalopathy
 - Comorbidities, physical or mental, which may be made worse by drinking
 - This checklist can be kept in your patient's medical records
- Austroads provides further *guidelines on assessing Fitness to Drive*
- You will be asked to provide your assessment as to whether the patient meets the medical criteria for an unconditional licence. If the patient does not meet these criteria, you should consider recommending an extension of the patient's interlock condition.

Do I need to complete a form?

Yes. You need to complete and sign the NSW Fitness to Drive Medical Assessment Form from Roads and Maritime.

The patient will have been sent this form and should bring it with them to the consultation. It is also available by calling Service NSW on 13 22 13. When complete, you can give this form back to the patient or send it directly to Roads and Maritime.

Roads and Maritime will use your assessment, and other available data, to decide whether the person meets the medical criteria for a licence, either with or without an interlock.

How do I bill for this consultation?

You can bill the assessment and management of the patient's alcohol use under Medicare.

However, completing or helping to complete the NSW Fitness to Drive Medical Assessment Form cannot be billed under Medicare.

For more information on helping a person with their drinking

- ***Drink-less Program resources*** (University of Sydney) – see scoring sheet and Handycard
 - An ***Alcohol Awareness Kit***, originally designed for Aboriginal Australians, includes a more visual form of the Drink-less 'Handycard', which may be useful for patients from a non-English speaking background
- See the ***Quick Reference Guide*** to the Treatment of Alcohol Problems (Department of Health – federal)
- For clinical support, health professionals only can access the **NSW Drug and Alcohol Specialist Advisory Service (DASAS)** on (02) 9361 8006 or 1800 023 687
- To find the nearest specialist alcohol and drug service, phone the **Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)** on 1800 422 599 or (02) 9361 8000
- See the ***standard drink sizes***.

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Checklist: Assessing Fitness to Drive in relation to alcohol use

This checklist is designed for GPs as an aid to assessing alcohol use, in addition to the Austroads Fitness to Drive guidelines. It does not have to be returned to Roads and Maritime. It can be kept in your patient's medical records.

Only the NSW Fitness to Drive Medical Assessment Form needs to be returned. Record your assessment on that form before returning it to Roads and Maritime.

1 standard drink:



middy of beer
(285ml)

OR



small glass of wine
(100ml)

OR



nip of spirits
(30ml)

1.5 standard drinks:



1 schooner of beer
(425ml)

OR



1 can
(375ml)

OR



1 stubby
(375ml)

A. Alcohol consumption (AUDIT-C)

Fill in the patient's answer to these three questions:

In the last 12 months:

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?

- Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly 4 times a week or more

2. How many standard drinks do you have on a day when you are drinking?

- 1 or 2 3 or 4 5 or 6 7-9 10 or more

3. How often do you have 6 or more standard drinks on one occasion?

- Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

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B. Dependence on alcohol

4. Does the patient have evidence of dependence on alcohol in the past 12 months?

Criterion	Sample questions/ checks	Tick if criterion present
1. Craving/compulsion	Do you drink because you want to, or because you have to? (If drinks because of compulsion, skip to Q2) If you don't have alcohol around, do you think about it a lot?	
2. Loss of control	How easy is it to stop once you have had one or two drinks?	
3. Withdrawals	If you stop drinking, do you get the shakes or feel cranky? (If yes, skip to Q4) What are you like in the morning before your first drink? (If irritable/cranky, criterion is present)	
4. Tolerance	Assess: Is there less impairment than expected for the amount consumed (based on history or observation)?	
5. Alcohol becoming a high priority (neglect of other interests/roles)	What is a typical day like for you? (If time is increasingly spent on alcohol rather than on other interests or responsibilities, check box)	
6. Drinking despite clear harms	Check for continued drinking despite being aware of clear harms experienced because of alcohol (e.g. liver problems; injuries; depressed mood)	
Number of criteria positive:		
Alcohol dependence present? (i.e. three or more criteria positive)		Y / N

5. [If dependent] When was the last relapse to heavy drinking (6+ drinks per day)?

Less than one month ago 1-2 months ago 3 or more months ago N/A

Note: Austroads' guidelines state that for an unconditional private licence, dependent drinkers must be in remission for one month or more (vs. 3+ months for a commercial licence).

C. Separation between drinking and driving (based on both self report and summary of interlock readings)

6. How well does the driver seem to be able to separate drinking from driving? Poorly Moderately well Well

7. Apparent insight into risks of drinking and driving? Poor Moderate Good

D. Complications of alcohol use which may impair driving ability

8. Has the patient experienced withdrawal seizures? In the last year Not in the last year Never

9. Has the patient experienced delirium? In the last year Not in the last year Never

10. Is there evidence of other complications or end organ damage which are likely to impair ability to drive?

e.g. Alcohol-related cognitive impairment Y/N

Encephalopathy Y/N

Cerebellar damage Y/N

Other [please specify]

E. Comorbidity which may impair driving

11. Does the person have a medical or mental health condition which is likely to impair ability to drive?

Specify

12. Does the patient have a condition, which when combined with their drinking, is likely to impair their ability to drive?

Specify

F. Comments

13. Comment on history, including its internal consistency and its compatibility with physical examination, with the patient's interlock blood alcohol concentration data, and with any blood test results:

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