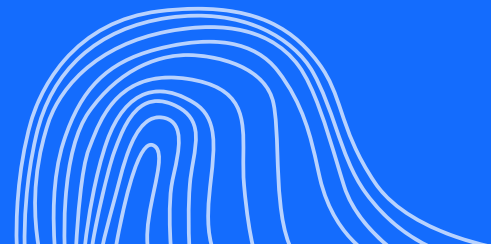


# Stage Three: Medical Assessment nearing completion of program

Factsheet for General Practitioners, July 2023  
NSW Alcohol Interlock Program



Resources required for this Stage Three consultation:

- **Checklist: Medical Assessment** (see Page 3 or download here)
- **NSW Mandatory Interlock Medical Examination Form** to be completed by GP (patient to supply)
- **National Medical Standards** (download here)

## Overview of the NSW Alcohol Interlock Program and the Drink-less Program

The [Alcohol Interlock Program](#) is a court-ordered requirement for some drink driving offenders. It is designed to reduce drink driving offending 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 [Drink-less Program](#) is a practical intervention package designed to assist GPs to screen for alcohol-related problems and offer appropriate advice to patients on drinking. It was initially developed at the University of Sydney and has been endorsed by the World Health Organisation, the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and the Chapter of Addiction Medicine of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

Your patient must provide you with a letter from Transport for NSW (the **NSW Mandatory Interlock Medical Examination Form**) that lists their attempts to drink and drive. You can use that additional, objective information as part of your assessment.

This patient is seeing you today because their interlock has detected attempts to drive after drinking alcohol in the last six months of the Alcohol Interlock Program. They are now legally required to see a GP for a medical consultation.

You are being asked to provide your assessment as to whether the patient should exit the Alcohol Interlock Program. This Fact Sheet assists GPs to make an assessment based on the national driver medical standards contained in [Assessing Fitness to Drive](#).

## Overview of national medical standards

The national driver medical standards set out the considerations and medical criteria for safe driving.

The primary purpose of the standards is to increase road safety in Australia by assisting GPs to:

- assess their patients in a consistent and appropriate manner based on current medical evidence
- promote the responsible behaviour of their patients, having regard to their medical fitness
- provide information to Transport for NSW to inform decisions on licensing.

GPs have a vital role in advising their patients about the importance of separating drinking from driving.

## How do I undertake a medical assessment in relation to the NSW Alcohol Interlock Program?

You can use the *Checklist: Medical Assessment* (see page 4) to help you consider your patient's alcohol use which is linked to the risk of repeat drink driving. This checklist does not need to be sent back to Transport for NSW and can be kept in your patient's medical records.

## Do I need to complete a form?

Yes.

You will need to complete and sign the *NSW Mandatory Interlock Medical Examination Form*. The patient will bring this to their consultation.

When you have completed the form, you can give it back to the patient or send it directly to Transport for NSW.

Transport for NSW 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 the NSW Mandatory Interlock Examination Form cannot be billed under Medicare.

## Dealing with individuals who are not regular patients

The national medical standards do not require you to have a pre-existing relationship with a patient in order to conduct an assessment.

If you have concerns, however, you should consider:

- asking for permission from the patient to request their medical file from their regular health professional
- conducting a more thorough examination of the patient than would usually be undertaken.

## Key roles and responsibilities

GPs	Transport for NSW
<p>Your role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess the patient based on the national medical standards and the available clinical information</li><li>• advise the patient about the impact of their alcohol use on their ability to drive and recommend restrictions, ongoing monitoring, rehabilitation / training or transitional arrangements as required</li><li>• make a recommendation to Transport for NSW using the NSW Mandatory Interlock medical Examination Form</li></ul> <p>It is <i>not</i> your role to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• restrict, reinstate or apply conditions to a patient's drivers licence; this responsibility sits with Transport for NSW. Your role is to provide a medical assessment to be used in the decision-making process by Transport for NSW.</li></ul>	<p>Transport for NSW's role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• make all decisions regarding the licensing of drivers. Transport for NSW will consider reports provided by GPs to make their determination</li><li>• provide relevant information resources and support for GPs about driver fitness assessment and licensing.</li></ul>

## Step-by-step guide to the medical assessment

### Step 1: Establish relevant medical and driving history

Use the *Checklist: Medical Assessment* (see page 4) to assess the patient's alcohol use and determine the degree of insight the patient has into their ability to separate their drinking from driving.

### Step 2: Undertake a clinical examination

A clinical examination will generally be required, focusing on the status and management of the patient's alcohol use to determine the risk of their involvement in a serious motor crash.

### Step 3: Consider the clinical examination results in conjunction with the patient's medical history, driving history and driving needs

Upon consideration of the available information, you will be asked to draw one of two conclusions:

1. The patient should be considered for an extension of the Alcohol Interlock Program.
2. The person should be considered for an exit from the Alcohol Interlock Program.

### Step 4: Report to Transport for NSW

The reporting process involves you completing the NSW Mandatory Interlock Medical Examination Form via the patient.

The original of the form should be given to the patient to return to Transport for NSW and a copy should be kept on file in the patient's medical record.

### Step 5: Follow-up

You have no obligation to contact the patient or Transport for NSW to determine if the patient has submitted their form and completed their reporting requirements. However, as a GP, it is appropriate during future patient contacts to ask about their alcohol use.

**Remember:** It is Transport for NSW that is ultimately responsible by law for making the licensing decision. You are simply required to make a recommendation for Transport for NSW clearly stating the facts that are available to you as well as your medical opinion.

For more information on helping a patient with their drinking:

- See the *2021 Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems* (4th edition) [here](#).
- DASAS is a free 24/7 telephone service that provides general advice to health professionals who require assistance with the clinical diagnosis and management of patients with alcohol and other drug related concerns. Within Sydney Metropolitan Area: (02) 8382-1006 or Regional, Rural & Remote NSW: 1800 023 687.
- For 24/7 information, support, and referrals for those affected by alcohol and other drug use, call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 1800 250 015.

## Checklist: Medical Assessment

How well does the patient seem to be able to separate drinking from driving?

☐ Poorly                      ☐ Moderately well                      ☐ Well

Apparent patient insight into risks of drinking and driving?

☐ Poor                      ☐ Moderate                      ☐ Good

	0	1	2	3	4	Score
1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?	Never	Monthly or less	2+ times a month	2+ times a week	4+ times a week	
2. How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?	1 to 2	3 to 4	5 to 6	7 to 9	10 or more	
3. How often do you have six or more standard drinks on one occasion?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
4. How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
5. How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
6. How often during the last year have you needed a drink first thing in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
7. How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
8. How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because of your drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
9. Have you or someone else been injured because of your drinking?	No		Yes, but not in the last year		Yes, during the last year	
10. Has a relative, friend, doctor or other healthcare worker been concerned about your drinking or suggest you cut down?	No		Yes, but not in the last year		Yes, during the last year	
To score: Questions 1-8 are scored as 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 Questions 9 and 10 are scored as 0, 2 or 4 only  Scores 1-7 = low risk; scores 8-12 = at-risk; scores 13+ = high-risk.						

## National medical standards

The national driver medical standards set out the considerations and medical criteria for safe driving (see full standards [here](#); in particular, see *Section 9: Substance Misuse*).

When completing the *NSW Mandatory Interlock Medical Examination Form* and making a recommendation to Transport for NSW as to whether the patient should exit the Alcohol Interlock Program or be subject to an extension, GPs should also consider the following:

### *Licensing responsibility*

The responsibility for issuing, renewing, suspending or cancelling a person's driver licence (including a conditional licence) ultimately lies with Transport for NSW. Licensing decisions are based on a full consideration of relevant factors relating to health and driving performance.

### *The presence of other medical conditions*

While a person may meet individual criteria, concurrent medical conditions may combine to affect fitness to drive – for example, hearing, visual or cognitive impairment. This may include cognitive impairments relevant to driving or end-organ effects that impact on driving. For example, long-term heavy alcohol use is also associated with various end-organ pathologies that may affect the ability to drive such as Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome or peripheral neuropathies, experienced as numbness or paresthesia of the hands or feet. See the full standards for more information if required.

### *Alcohol Interlock Program*

Key to successfully completing the Alcohol Interlock Program is the patient demonstrating insights into the risks of drink driving and that you are satisfied that the patient is able to separate their drinking from their driving.