



Driving Instruction Guidelines Following Surgery/Fractures:

First and foremost, driving guidelines are about the safety of you, the patient, but also of those on the road with you. Therefore, the two most important rules are:

1. **You must be off of your narcotic medications** (i.e. Vicodin, Norco, Percocet, codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, or any mixture of those, etc.). These medications tend to cause drowsiness.
2. **You must be pain-free with your motion while driving.** If there is any pain with movement, your mind causes a delayed response as it weighs the options of avoiding the accident versus causing pain to yourself by steering and/or stopping the car. Although the delay may only be for a split second, that time makes a difference. Whether it is swerving to avoid another car, a ball rolling across the street, or a child running across a street, all of these may have harmful consequences if not avoided. Therefore, if it is swerving the wheel (you'll need both hands to do this correctly) or stomping on a brake, these motions must be pain free.

Remember, these are general guidelines based on the safety of you and others on the road with you. These guidelines have been made with the support of trials and clinical research. Please ask your doctor at your appointment if he/she has any further instructions for driving based on your specific case.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the United States recommends not driving with any splint or immobilization device.

Surgical/Fracture Guidelines:

Please allow the following timeframe for proper healing before attempting to drive.

Ankle fracture: 9 weeks overall typically, but roughly 2 weeks after removal of the cast for nonsurgical ankle fracture treatment

Knee arthroscopy: 3-4 weeks post-operative

ACL reconstruction: 4-6 weeks post-operative

Lower extremity fractures: 6 weeks after initiation of weight bearing. No driving while in a CAM walker or cast (below the knee cast or above the knee cast), on the right leg.

Upper extremity surgery/fractures: No driving while in a sling or a cast (above the elbow or below the elbow)

Total hip replacement: 6 weeks after the right side (2-4 weeks after the left side, unless driving a stick-shift vehicle)

Total knee replacement: 6 weeks after the right side (2-4 weeks after the left side, unless driving a stick-shift vehicle)

If you think you are ready for driving prior to these timelines, there are driving tests that you can take that evaluates your reaction time and your ability to operate safely. This may be covered by insurance for total joint patients. Please contact your insurance company.

Below are some examples:

Century Driving Group - Driver rehabilitation consult (www.centurydriving.com) (616-392-2435)

Holland Hospital (South Washington) Occupational therapy - pre-driver screen (616-355-3910)

Corewell Health—Driver's Assessment Program (616-391-6249)