



**epilepsy
society**

driving and travel

Driving regulations and travel costs



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When you see this symbol, it means further information is available.

Call us for a large print version

Epilepsy Society is grateful to Dr Joanna Lever, Medical Adviser at the DVLA, for her guidance on this leaflet.

helpline

01494 601 400

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm
(national call rate)

driving regulations and help with travel costs

For people who drive, one immediate effect of having a seizure is that they have to stop driving. This is true for all types of seizures, whether you have a diagnosis of epilepsy or not. For many people this can have a big impact on their life, and be very difficult or upsetting. This leaflet explains the driving regulations, and travel alternatives, for people with epilepsy.

The driver and vehicle licensing agency (DVLA) is the organisation that licenses cars and drivers for driving on public roads in Great Britain. If you have a driving licence, by law it is your duty to tell the DVLA about any medical condition which may affect your ability to drive, including epilepsy. This is a condition of holding a driving licence.

If you have a driving licence, and have a seizure of any kind, the DVLA regulations say that **you must stop driving**. You are responsible for telling the DVLA and returning your licence to them.

The regulations cover all epileptic seizures: auras and warnings, seizures where you are conscious, myoclonic seizures and seizures where you lose consciousness.

These regulations apply even after just one seizure, whether you have a diagnosis of epilepsy or not, and whether you are taking anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) or not.

Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive

The 'Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive' are the DVLA regulations about medical conditions that everyone has to meet in order to hold a driving licence.

The standards are based on advice from expert medical advisory panels, and comply with both legislation in the United Kingdom and in Europe. Only the medical advisers at the DVLA are able to decide whether or not someone meets the standards of fitness to drive.

A 'Customer service guide for drivers with medical conditions' and an 'At a glance guide to the Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive' (for medical practitioners) are available through the Directgov website.



See page 22 for contact details.

DVLA terminology

The DVLA uses some specific terms in its documents. For example, it uses 'asleep seizures' for seizures that happen while you are asleep (sometimes called 'nocturnal seizures'). In this leaflet we use the term 'asleep seizures'. It also uses the term 'awake seizures' for seizures that happen while you are awake.

The DVLA also uses the term 'anti-epilepsy drugs', which we refer to in this leaflet as 'anti-epileptic drugs' or 'AEDs'.

the driving regulations for epilepsy

Group 1 licences

This group includes cars, motorcycles and mopeds. To drive, you must meet all normal driving requirements **and** have been completely free of seizures for one year, either **with or without** taking anti-epileptic drugs.

The regulations are different if you only have asleep seizures. See page 6.

Group 2 licences

This group includes large goods vehicles (LGV or lorries), passenger carrying vehicles (PCV or buses and minibuses with nine seats or more) and horse boxes. To drive, you must meet all normal driving requirements **and** have been seizure-free, **without** taking anti-epileptic drugs, for the last 10 years. The DVLA will also need to be satisfied that you are not likely to have any more seizures.

Please note: the regulations are different for people who have had a first and solitary (single) seizure. See page 16.

Taxi drivers

Many local authorities apply the regulations for Group 2 licences to driving a taxi. However, each local authority decides on its own standards to drive.



Contact your local council for details.

Asleep seizures

'Asleep seizures' are seizures that happen while you are sleeping (sometimes called 'nocturnal seizures'). They can happen if you sleep in the daytime, not just at night. If you have an asleep seizure you must stop driving. If you are then seizure-free for one year you can apply for a new licence. This is the same as the regulations for seizures while you are awake ('awake seizures').

However, if you are not seizure-free but you have **only** had asleep seizures for three years, the regulations are different from those for awake seizures.

This means that if, in the last three years, your seizures have only happened in your sleep, and none while you are awake, you can drive even if you are still having asleep seizures. It is important that this pattern of only asleep seizures is seen over at least three years. You will still need to tell the DVLA and your insurance company about your seizures.

Breakthrough seizures

Breakthrough seizures are seizures that happen when someone's epilepsy has otherwise been fully controlled (and they have not been having seizures). If you are seizure-free and have a driving licence, and you have a breakthrough seizure, you will have to stop driving and tell the DVLA. The regulations on page 5 will apply to you.

Forklift trucks, farm vehicles and sit-on lawn mowers

The DVLA regulations cover vehicles that are driven on public highways, not vehicles that are used on private land. A driving licence is not needed for the following vehicles as long as they are *only* being driven on private land and *not* on public roads.

A driving licence is not needed for driving forklift trucks, farm vehicles (such as tractors and quad bikes) and sit-on lawn mowers on private land.

Employers need to consider health and safety regulations if someone drives these vehicles on private land as part of their job. Advice is available from the Health and Safety Executive. The standards they advise are similar to car and LGV standards, depending on the vehicle's size and weight.

If these vehicles are driven on public highways then a driving licence would be needed.



Contact the Health and Safety Executive on 0845 345 0055 or visit www.hse.gov.uk

Electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters

Electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters are not considered to be 'vehicles' and so you do not need a driving licence to use them. This is the case whether they are used on public or private land.

Regulations for non-epileptic seizures

Non-epileptic seizures usually come under the DVLA regulations for 'loss of consciousness or loss of, or altered, awareness' within the Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive.

If you have any questions about the driving regulations for non-epileptic seizures you can contact the DVLA.



See page 22 for contact details.

Driving in the Republic of Ireland (Eire)

The Road Traffic Regulations 2004 for the Republic of Ireland are different from the regulations for the UK. For example:

- if in the last year you have only had asleep seizures, then you will be allowed to apply for a licence;
- if your first and only seizure is considered to be 'provoked' (see page 10) then you may be able to start driving again if a neurologist says that you can; and
- if you have only simple focal seizures (also known as simple partial seizures) where you are fully conscious, then you are allowed to drive if you have only ever had this type of seizure, and you have had these seizures for at least a year.



For more information contact Brainwave (see page 22) or visit the Road Safety Authority at www.rsa.ie.

for drivers who have a seizure

If you have a driving licence, and have a seizure of any kind, the DVLA regulations say that **you must stop driving**. You are responsible for telling the DVLA and returning your licence to them.

To return your licence, you need to fill in a 'Declaration of Surrender for Medical Reasons' form. If you have a Group 2 licence you also need to fill in a VOC99 form. You can get these forms from the DVLA or the Directgov website. It may be helpful to keep a copy of everything you send to the DVLA for your own records.



See page 22 for contact details.

If you drive after having a seizure

- Your licence will not be valid.
- You will be driving illegally – driving without a valid licence is a criminal offence.
- Your car insurance will not be valid. You may have to pay the costs of a claim from another person.

What happens if I don't tell the DVLA?

If you do not voluntarily surrender your licence to the DVLA, and are found to be driving, the DVLA may be notified and your licence revoked (taken away).

Will my doctor tell the DVLA?

It is your duty to tell the DVLA if you have had a seizure. The General Medical Council (which registers doctors in the UK) has guidelines for doctors about this. These say that doctors should explain to you that you have a legal duty to tell the DVLA, and they will write this in your medical records. If you continue to drive they can tell the medical adviser at the DVLA and break medical confidentiality due to the continued risk both to you and to members of the public. They should tell you first if they are going to do this.

What can I do if the DVLA revokes my licence?

If the DVLA revokes your licence or refuses your re-application for a licence, you can appeal against this decision. You need to make your appeal in writing. In England and Wales, this needs to be at a magistrates' court within six months of the DVLA's decision, and in Scotland, within 21 days at a Sheriff's Court. It is a good idea to talk to your doctor about any further medical evidence they could give the DVLA to consider.

Exceptional circumstances

If a person with no history of seizures has a seizure caused, or 'provoked', by something that is unlikely to happen again, this may be an 'exceptional circumstance'. This might include a seizure happening immediately at the time of a head injury or a stroke. The DVLA looks at these circumstances on an individual basis.

Seizures caused by alcohol or drug misuse, sleep deprivation, or side effects of medication are not usually considered provoked. If your first and only seizure is caused by alcohol or drug misuse, and you have a Group 1 licence, you will have to stop driving until you have been seizure-free for at least six months. If you have a Group 2 licence you will have to stop driving until you are seizure-free for at least five years, without taking anti-epileptic drugs. These are the same regulations as for other solitary seizures (see page 16). You will also need to meet the driving standards for alcohol or drug misuse.

getting your new licence

Once you meet the DVLA regulations to drive, you can apply for a new licence.

Group 1 licences

If you have epilepsy you must meet all normal driving requirements and have been completely free of seizures for one year, either with or without taking anti-epileptic drugs.

Group 2 licences

If you have epilepsy you must meet all normal driving requirements and have been seizure-free, without taking anti-epileptic drugs, for 10 years. The DVLA will also need to be satisfied that you are not likely to have any more seizures.

As the process of re-issuing a licence can take time, you can apply for your licence up to eight weeks before your one year seizure-free date. If you surrendered your licence, you may be able to start driving again once the DVLA has confirmed it has received your re-application, and your doctor confirms that you meet the standards. This does not apply if your licence was revoked. The DVLA will usually send you a questionnaire and ask permission to contact your doctor before issuing a new licence.

What sort of licence will I get?

When you get your new licence it will usually be a three-year licence. If you are then seizure-free for five years you may be given a licence valid until you are 70 (as with people who do not have epilepsy). This is called a 'till 70' licence. If you have only ever had one seizure and you are otherwise well, and it is more than six months since the seizure, you may be given a 'till 70' licence without having to have a three-year one first.

Telling your insurance company

If you have stopped driving due to a seizure, you will need to tell your insurance company. Insurance companies need to know if you have stopped driving due to a medical condition as part of their terms and conditions. If you don't tell the insurance company, and they find out that you have stopped driving, this may affect your insurance in the future. You may want to ask them if this affects a no-claims discount.



Once the DVLA confirms that you can have a driving licence, you can drive the vehicles that your licence covers.

Under the Equality Act 2010 insurance companies cannot increase the cost of a policy if a disability does not affect the risk of making a claim. Before giving a quote, an insurance company needs to consider your individual circumstances. When you get your licence back, it is usually a three-year licence.

Insurance companies cannot use the fact that you have a three-year licence as a reason for increasing the premium, or changing or refusing a policy.

Insurance companies can ask questions or ask for more information about medical conditions to support your application. They may ask to see your driving licence or a letter from the DVLA confirming that you are allowed to drive. This should mean that each application is considered fairly. If the company increases your premium, they must be able to give you a reason why.

It may be worth contacting several companies to get the best quote for you.



Contact the Equality and Human Rights Commission for more about the Equality Act (see page 23).

If you have any problems with insurance contact the Financial Ombudsman Service.



See page 23 for contact details.

Stopping medication

If you stop taking your AEDs, there is a risk that your seizures will start again.

The DVLA advises that you stop driving while you are coming off your medication and for six months after you have stopped your medication. During this time, if you have a seizure you will need to stop driving and surrender your licence. If you then become seizure-free for one year, you can apply for a new licence (as with Group 1 licence regulations – see page 5).

Driving abroad

If you have a UK driving licence you can drive under this licence in the UK, in countries in the European Economic Area and in the European Community. You may need an International Driving Permit for other countries.

If you have a history of epilepsy, you will need to fulfil the UK regulations to drive in the UK. When driving abroad, you must meet the medical standards for the country you are visiting.

If you are coming to the UK and need to apply, or reapply, for a UK licence, then the one year seizure-free ruling applies.



Visit Directgov's website (see page 22).

For more about driving abroad contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



See page 23 for contact details.

learning to drive

If you have epilepsy and want to learn to drive, you will need to be seizure-free for one year. Even if you have been seizure-free for a year, you still need to tell the DVLA about your epilepsy. You will need to fill in a standard application form and the DVLA will send you a form for more details about your epilepsy.

If possible, the DVLA will decide whether you can have a driving licence based on the information you provide in the forms. If they need more information, they may contact your doctor as part of this process.

The regulations are different if you only have asleep seizures (see page 6).

Although you have to wait until you have been seizure-free for one year to start lessons, you can do the theory test while you wait and your result is valid for two years.

first and solitary seizures

There are specific DVLA driving regulations for people after a first and solitary (single) epileptic seizure.

Regulations for a Group 1 licence

You must stop driving for **six months** from the date of the seizure, and tell the DVLA. You may be allowed to start driving again after six months if you have had no further seizures and there are no clinical factors (such as a scar on the brain) or results from investigations (such as an EEG) which suggest a high risk of you having another seizure.

Regulations for a Group 2 licence

You must stop driving for **five years** from the date of the seizure, and tell the DVLA. You may be allowed to start driving again after five years if there are no clinical factors (such as a scar on the brain) or results from investigations (such as an EEG) that suggest a high risk of you having another seizure. You must not have been prescribed anti-epileptic drugs during the five years immediately before getting the licence.

If you feel that these regulations apply to you, you can talk to your specialist or call the DVLA drivers medical group on 0300 790 6806.

Note: these regulations **only** apply to people who have had a first and single seizure. They do not apply to people diagnosed with epilepsy (see page 5).

help with travel costs

People with epilepsy are often entitled to free or discounted travel. For people with epilepsy who have seizures this is usually because they would be refused a driving licence.

Free bus travel throughout England

People with epilepsy may be eligible for a free National Bus Pass. This can be used 'off peak' from 9.30am to 11pm Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends and Bank Holidays, on local buses anywhere in England. Some local councils have additional travel discounts.

If you have had a seizure in the last year, and so wouldn't be allowed to drive, you should be eligible for the pass. You may need a letter from a doctor to confirm that you are eligible, and you may have to pay for this.



Contact your local council to apply or visit Directgov's website (see page 22).

Travel in London

People with epilepsy who live in London may be entitled to a Freedom Pass, getting free bus, train, tram and tube travel throughout London.

Some London Boroughs have a 'London Taxicard Scheme' for reduced cost taxi travel. You may be eligible if your epilepsy affects your ability to walk or makes it difficult to use public transport. You may need your GP to sign your application form.



See page 23 for contact details.

Travel in Merseyside

People with epilepsy who live in Merseyside are entitled to a Merseyside National Travel Pass. This allows free travel on local buses anywhere in England between 9.30am and 11pm, and on most buses, trains and ferries in Merseyside all day, every day.



Visit Merseytravel's website at www.merseytravel.gov.uk

Travel in Scotland

People with epilepsy in Scotland who would be refused a driving licence are eligible for a Scotland-wide free bus travel pass. This allows free travel on local and long-distance bus services throughout Scotland at any time of the day. If you are on certain benefits, you may also be eligible for a companion to travel with you for free.



Contact your local authority (Travel Card Unit for Strathclyde), visit Directgov's website or ring Epilepsy Scotland's helpline (see page 22).

Travel in Wales

People with epilepsy in Wales are entitled to a bus pass that allows free local bus travel throughout Wales at any time of the day.



Visit Directgov's website (see page 22).

Travelling by coach

National Express gives discount fares for people with disabilities, including epilepsy, and other coach companies may offer similar discounts.



Contact National Express (see page 23).

Travelling by train

People who are unable to drive due to their epilepsy can apply for a Disabled Person's Railcard. This gives them, and a companion, a third off most train fares in England, Wales and Scotland. To apply, you need a copy of your Exemption Certificate for anti-epileptic drugs (for free prescriptions), a photocopy of your prescription or a letter from the DVLA saying that you are not allowed to drive. There is a charge for this railcard.



Contact the Disabled Person's Railcard Office (see page 22).

Community transport services

Community transport services include schemes such as Dial-a-Ride. They are provided by local councils for people who have difficulty using public transport or who need wheelchair-accessible transport. Services vary from area to area.



Look up 'community transport' in your local phone book, or visit the Directgov or a2b websites (see page 22).

The Access to Work scheme

If you are unable to use public transport due to your epilepsy, you may be able to get help towards the cost of getting to work through the Access to Work scheme.



Visit Directgov's website for details of your nearest Access to Work contact centre (see page 22).

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme provides financial help towards transport costs for people on certain benefits or a low income. The scheme covers travel to hospital for NHS medical treatment but does not include routine GP or dentist appointments.



Visit Directgov's website or the Help with health cost advice line (see pages 22 – 23).

Other travel benefits

If you qualify for the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), you may be entitled to:

- a Blue Badge parking permit (that can be used by another driver when they are driving you), which also entitles you to register for a full discount on the London congestion charge; and
- free road tax for a car registered in your name, or someone who drives for you.



Contact the Disability Benefits Helpline or Directgov's website (see page 22).

travelling by air

Having epilepsy does not usually stop people from being able to travel by air. However, some people find that their seizures are triggered by extreme tiredness (such as jetlag), excitement or anxiety, or dehydration, all of which can be caused by travelling or flying.

If you are concerned that you may have a seizure while flying, you may find it helpful to tell the person you are travelling with, or to tell the airline when you book. Some airlines will ask for a letter from your doctor saying that it is OK for you to travel by air, and explaining what to do if you have a seizure while travelling by air.

It is recommended that you keep all your medication (in its original containers) in your hand luggage, and carry information from your GP or specialist about your epilepsy and your medication.

 **See our leaflet *leisure*.**

other organisations

a2b – community transport network

www.a2binfo.net

Information on community transport.

Brainwave – Irish Epilepsy Association

353 (0)1 455 7500

www.epilepsy.ie

Directgov

www.direct.gov.uk

UK Government website.

Disability Benefits Helpline

08457 123 456

Information on road tax exemption.

Disabled Person's Railcard Office

0845 605 0525

www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Information on reduced train fares.

DVLA

General enquiries 0300 790 6801

Drivers medical group 0300 790 6806

www.dft.gov.uk/dvla

Information on driving regulations.

Epilepsy Scotland

0808 800 2200

www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk

Information on bus travel in Scotland.



Equality and Human Rights Commission

Helpline: 0845 604 6610

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Information on disability discrimination.

Financial Ombudsman Service

Consumer helpline: 0845 023 4567

www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Guidance about problems with insurance.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

www.fco.gov.uk

Information on driving abroad.

Freedom Pass

0845 275 7054

www.freedompass.org

Information on travel in London.

Help with health cost advice line

0845 850 1166

Information on healthcare travel costs.

National Express

08717 818 179

www.nationalexpress.com

Information on coach travel.

Taxicard

www.taxicard.org.uk

Information on the London Taxicard Scheme.

Every effort is made to ensure that all information is correct. Please note that information may change after printing. This information is not a substitute for advice from your own doctors. Epilepsy Society is not responsible for any actions taken as a result of using this information.

www.epilepsysociety.org.uk

cares

A full life for everyone affected by epilepsy.

informs

Website, leaflets, dvds – call 01494 601 392.

researches

Pioneering medical research.

campaigns

Shaping the future of epilepsy.

connects



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Volunteer, become a member, fundraise.

educates

Awareness, schools, training for professionals.

understands

Medical and care services.

listens

helpline 01494 601 400

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

Confidential. National call rate.

Information and emotional support.

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Epilepsy Society is the working name of The National Society for Epilepsy
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