

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 seizure, and whether the person has a diagnosis of epilepsy or not. For many people this can have a big impact on their life, and can also be difficult and upsetting.

The driving agencies license cars and drivers for driving on public roads. In England, Scotland, and Wales it is the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). In Northern Ireland it is the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA). If you have a driving licence, by law it is your duty to tell the driving agency about any medical condition that may affect your ability to drive, including epilepsy. This is a condition of holding a driving licence.

See page 6 for DVLA and DVA contact details.

Medical standards of fitness to drive

The Road Traffic Act 1988 regards epileptic seizures as a 'relevant disability'. This means that if you have one or more seizures, by law you must meet certain medical standards in order to have a driving licence.

The DVLA's 'Assessing fitness to drive' sets out the medical standards and regulations for driving, advised by expert medical panels, and based on UK legislation.

Only the driving agencies can decide whether a licence can be issued. The standards apply even if you have had only one seizure, and whether you are taking anti-seizure medication (ASM) or not.

The driving regulations for epilepsy cover all epileptic seizures, including seizures where you are conscious, myoclonic seizures, focal seizures (auras), and seizures where you lose consciousness.

If you are not sure how these regulations apply to you, contact the driving agency. You can download the DVLA factsheet for people with epilepsy (INS9) from the DVLA website.

Visit gov.uk/government/publications/ins9-epilepsy-fact-sheet

What do I do if I've had a seizure?

If you have a driving licence and have a seizure of any kind, in most cases **you must stop driving*** and tell the driving agency. It is your responsibility to tell the driving agency and returning your licence to them (see page 2).

*If you already have an established pattern of certain types of seizure you may be able to continue to drive (see page 3).

If you have had a seizure, you also need to tell your insurance company as part of your insurance terms and conditions. If you don't tell them, this could invalidate your insurance and may affect your insurance in the future.

Why do I have to stop driving and tell the driving agency?

It is important to stop driving and tell the driving agency because:

- there is a risk that you might have a seizure while driving;
- your licence will not be valid and driving without a valid licence is a criminal offence;
- you could be fined up to £1000; and
- your car insurance will not be valid.

Can my doctor tell the driving agency?

If you have a seizure, **it is your responsibility to tell the driving agency.**

Guidelines from the General Medical Council (which registers doctors in the UK) tell doctors to explain that it is your legal duty to tell the driving agency, and that they will write this in your medical records.

This information explains the driving regulations for people with epilepsy in the United Kingdom. It also explains what help is available with travel costs.

Helpline 01494 601400
Confidential, national call rate.
Information and emotional support.
Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/helpline
for opening hours.

If you continue to drive, they can break confidentiality and tell the driving agency. They should tell you if they are going to do this.

How do I tell the driving agency?

In Great Britain there are three ways to tell the DVLA:

1. If you have a **Group 1 licence (cars and motorcycles)**, fill in the 'Declaration of surrender for medical reasons' form and send it to the driving agency along with your licence. It may help to keep a copy of your licence or take a note of the licence number for when you reapply for your new licence. You may also want to keep a copy of your surrender acknowledgement letter, from the DVLA, as proof of eligibility for discounted travel. If you have a **Group 2 licence (buses, coaches, and lorries)** you need to fill in form VOC99/CERT.
2. You can complete an FEP1 form (FEP1V for Group 2 licences). If you do this, the driving agency will carry out medical enquiries and may take away your licence (revoke it). They will send you a letter telling you their decision and when you can reapply for a new licence. If you disagree with their decision, you can appeal (see page 4).
3. You can complete the online form at gov.uk/epilepsy-and-driving. However, this will be treated the same way as the FEP1 form and your licence may be revoked (see above). The online form is not currently available for Group 2 licences or undiagnosed seizures.

You can download the DVLA forms at gov.uk below, or you can call them for a copy.

See page 6 for contact details.

Visit gov.uk/giving-up-your-driving-licence

How do I tell the DVA (in Northern Ireland)?

In Northern Ireland you can surrender your licence by sending a letter to the DVA explaining why you are surrendering your licence, along with both parts of your licence. If you do not wish to surrender your licence, you can let the DVA know by phone or email. They will then send a medical questionnaire for you to complete.

See page 6 for contact details.

The benefit of surrendering your licence

If you surrender your licence voluntarily, you may be able to start driving again as soon as your doctor confirms that you meet the medical standards to drive, and the driving agency confirms that it has received your application.

If your licence is revoked, you will not be able to drive until the driving agency issues your new licence and you have received it.

Visit gov.uk/government/publications/inf1886-can-i-drive-while-my-application-is-with-dvla

When can I drive again?

When you can drive depends on the type of seizures you have now, the type of seizures you have had previously, and the type of licence you have (see opposite and page 3).

Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/driving-and-epilepsy-quick-guide

You must also meet all normal driving requirements and these two conditions:

- You must follow your doctor's advice about your treatment and check ups.
- The driving agency must be satisfied that you are not likely to have any more seizures.

Provoked seizures

If someone with **no history of seizures** 'or previous brain disease' has a seizure caused by something that is unlikely to happen again, this may be a provoked seizure'.

The driving agency must agree with your doctor that the seizure was provoked.

The driving agencies will look at provoked seizures on an individual basis but usually you will have to stop driving for six months for a Group 1 licence and up to five years for Group 2.

Seizures caused by sleep deprivation are not usually considered provoked.

First and single (isolated) seizure

This is a first and single seizure that is not provoked (see above) in a person who has never had any other unprovoked seizures. It includes where someone has had more than one seizure if they all occurred within a 24 hour period.

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Group 1 licence: 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 tests (such as an EEG) which suggest an increased risk of you having another seizure.

Group 2 licence: You may be allowed to start driving again after five years if you have seen a specialist and there are no clinical factors (such as a scar on the brain) or results from tests (such as an EEG) which suggest a high risk of you having another seizure. You must not have been prescribed anti-seizure medication (ASM) during the five years before applying for a new licence.

If you have ever had a previous seizure the DVLA will apply the following regulations even if you have had a significant number of years seizure free.

Awake seizures

These are the regulations if your seizures start when you are awake and affect your consciousness or ability to act:

- **Group 1 licence.** You must meet all normal driving requirements **and** must have been completely free of seizures for one year, whether you are prescribed ASM or not. Different regulations may apply if your seizures do not affect your consciousness (see opposite).
- **Group 2 licence.** You must meet all normal driving requirements **and** must have been seizure-free, without ASM, for the last 10 years.

Asleep seizures

Asleep seizures (sometimes called 'nocturnal seizures') are seizures that happen as you are falling asleep, while you are asleep, or as you are waking up. The term 'asleep seizure' might also apply if you have a seizure in your sleep during the day, if sleeping during the day is part of your normal routine (for example, shift work).

If you have had asleep seizures and are then seizure free for **one year**, you can apply for a Group 1 licence, as you can for 'awake seizures' (see above).

If you continue to have **only** asleep seizures, you may be eligible to apply for a new Group 1 licence after one year, depending on the pattern of your seizures (see opposite).

Permitted seizures

The following are types of seizure where you can drive under a Group 1 licence. The DVLA form (INS9) has more details about permitted seizures.

Awake seizures that do not affect consciousness or the ability to act

For some types of awake seizure, you may be able to drive under a new Group 1 licence after **one year** even if you are still having seizures. This is only if **all** of the following apply to you:

- You stay fully conscious during your seizures.
- Your seizures do not stop you doing anything (affect your ability to act).
- You have only ever had this type of seizure and have never had a seizure that affects your consciousness or ability to act.

If you **have** or **have ever** had a seizure which affects your ability to act, such as where you are confused or unable to remember what happens, these standards will not apply to you.

Asleep seizures (see opposite) with no history of seizures when awake

If you have only ever had asleep seizures (and have **never** had an awake seizure), once this pattern of only asleep seizures has been seen for **one year**, you can apply for a Group 1 licence, even if you still have these seizures. If you then have an awake seizure, you will need to stop driving and tell the driving agency.

Asleep seizures (see opposite) with a history of awake seizures

If you have had **only asleep seizures over a period of three years** since your last awake seizure, you can apply for a Group 1 licence, even if you still have asleep seizures.

It is important that this pattern of **only** asleep seizures is seen over at least three years, starting from the first asleep seizure you have had since your last awake seizure.

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Stopping medication

If you are seizure-free and stop taking your ASM, there is a risk that your seizures will start again. If you, **with your doctor**, decide to stop taking (withdraw) your ASM, your doctor is likely to advise you to stop driving **while** you are withdrawing **and** for six months after you have stopped your ASM. This advice will be based on the recommendation of the DVLA. If you drive against your doctor's advice, it may invalidate your motor insurance. Your doctor may give you different advice about driving if you only have permitted seizures (see page 3).

If you have a seizure that is not permitted after withdrawing your ASM, you will need to stop driving and tell the driving agency. If you go back onto the same medication at the same dose as before, and are seizure-free and on this medication for six months, you can apply for a new licence. This only applies if you withdraw your ASM under **medical supervision**.

Changing medication

If you are changing from one medication to another, your doctor will advise you if you need to stop driving.

However, if you have a seizure you will need to stop driving and tell the driving agency. If you go back onto the same medication and dose as you were on before, and are seizure-free on this medication for six months, you can apply for a new licence.

An exception to the above is if you have 'permitted seizures' (see page 3). You will still need to tell the driving agency about the seizure but you may be allowed to carry on driving, depending on the type of seizures you have had previously.

How do I apply for my new licence?

Once you meet the medical standards to drive, you can apply to the DVLA for either a new, or a first, licence.

For a Group 1 licence you will need to fill in a D1 and FEP1 application form.

For a Group 2 licence you need D2 and FEP1V forms and, if you are aged 45 to 65, you will also need a D4 form and you will need to pay a doctor to complete this.

The FEP1 form asks for your permission for the DVLA to contact your GP or consultant if they need any further information.

See the GOV.UK website or contact the DVLA to order a D2, or D2/D4 pack and an FEP1 or FEP1V form. D1 forms are available from some post offices.

Visit [gov.uk/reapply-driving-licence](https://www.gov.uk/reapply-driving-licence)

In Northern Ireland, contact the DVA for a DL1 form or DL2 form for group 2, or you can apply online. Once they receive this from you, they may send you a medical questionnaire.

Visit nidirect.gov.uk/articles/reapply-your-driving-licence-when-medically-fit

If possible, the driving agency will decide whether you can have a driving licence based on the information you provide in these forms.

As the process of issuing a licence can take time, you can apply for your licence up to eight weeks before you would normally be eligible to drive.

You will not usually need to take your driving test again.

What sort of licence will I get?

When you get your Group 1 licence it will usually be a medical licence, valid for between one and five years. If you are seizure-free for five years, you may be given a licence which is valid until you are 70.

Once the driving agency confirms that you can have a driving licence, you can drive any vehicle that your licence covers.

What if my licence is revoked or refused?

If the driving agency revokes your licence or refuses your application for a new licence, you can write to the DVLA to ask them to reconsider, but you must have new information that was not in the original application.

Alternatively, you can appeal against the 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.

You must also tell the DVLA, in writing, that you are going to appeal.

In Northern Ireland, an appeal must be lodged with the appropriate Clerk of Petty Sessions within three months of the date of the issue of the refusal/revocation letter to you. You must also tell the DVA, in writing, that you are going to appeal.

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It is important to get legal advice before deciding to appeal, as you may have to pay legal fees, or you may be able to get legal aid to pay for the costs.

Visit [gov.uk/check-legal-aid](https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid)

Car insurance

Insurance companies can ask questions or for more information about medical conditions to assess your application. They may ask to see your driving licence or a letter from the driving agency confirming that you are allowed to drive.

Under the Equality Act 2010, insurance companies cannot increase the cost of a policy if a medical condition does not affect the risk of making a claim.

Visit [equalityhumanrights.com](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Insurance companies cannot use the fact that you have a medical licence as a reason for increasing the premium, or changing or refusing a policy. If they increase your premium, they must be able to tell you why. This should mean that each application is considered fairly. It may be worth contacting several companies to get the best quote.

If you have any problems with insurance, you can contact the Financial Ombudsman Service (see page 6 for contact details).

If you have not been driving for two years, this may affect any no-claims discount you had before.

Taxi drivers

Local authorities set their own standards for taxi drivers, and some use the DVLA regulations for Group 2 licences.

Visit [gov.uk/find-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council)

Learning to drive

If you have epilepsy and want to learn to drive, you need to meet the medical standards for the type of seizures you have (see pages 2 and 3). You will need to tell the driving agency about your epilepsy when you fill in the regular application form.

Driving abroad

To drive abroad, you must meet the medical standards for driving for the country you visit. If you are coming to the UK and need to apply, or reapply, for a UK licence, then the regulations in this factsheet will apply to you.

Where you don't need a licence

The DVLA medical standards cover vehicles that are driven on public highways, not those 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: forklift trucks, farm vehicles (such as tractors and quad bikes), and sit-on lawn mowers.

Employers need to consider health and safety regulations if someone drives these vehicles on private land as part of their job.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advises on driving standards for these vehicles that are similar to Group 1 and 2 standards, depending on their size and weight. If these vehicles are driven on public highways, a driving licence would be needed.

Visit [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)

Electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters

There are two 'classes' of electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Class 2 cannot be used on the road, but Class 3 can. You don't need to have a licence for either, but you need to register and tax Class 3 as it can be used on the road (although you may be able to claim disability exemption for the tax).

Your doctor may be able to advise whether these wheelchairs or scooters are suitable and safe for you to use.

Visit [gov.uk/mobility-scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs-rules](https://www.gov.uk/mobility-scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs-rules)

Help with travel costs

If you have epilepsy and are still having seizures you may be entitled to free, or discounted, travel on buses, coaches, trams, tubes or trains. This is usually because you would be refused a driving licence if you applied.

Visit [epilepsysociety.org.uk/what-help-available](https://www.epilepsysociety.org.uk/what-help-available)

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You usually need proof that you are eligible for the discount. This may vary depending on where you live, the type of transport, and the rules of the discount scheme. Most councils will accept your letter from the DVLA either revoking your licence or acknowledging receipt of surrendering your licence as proof of eligibility for discounted travel. Contact each travel company to find out more, or your local council for details about the national bus pass.

You may be able to use community transport schemes, such as Dial-a-Ride, for people who have difficulty using public transport.

Visit [gov.uk/community-transport-services-shopmobility](https://www.gov.uk/community-transport-services-shopmobility)

The NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme provides financial help for people on certain benefits, or a low income, to get to some medical appointments.

Visit [nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs)

If you are unable to use public transport due to your epilepsy, you may be able to get financial help with the cost of getting to and from work through the government's Access to Work scheme.

Visit [gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

Other travel benefits

If you qualify for certain benefits based on your mobility, you may be entitled to:

- a Blue Badge parking permit (can be used by another driver when you are a passenger). This also entitles you to register for a full discount on the London congestion charge.

Visit [gov.uk/apply-blue-badge](https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge)

- free road tax for a car registered in your name, or for a car which someone drives for you specifically, with you as a passenger.

Visit [gov.uk/get-vehicle-tax-exemption-disability](https://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-tax-exemption-disability)

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Further information

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Medical enquiries: 0300 790 6806
[gov.uk/contact-the-dvla/y/driving-and-medical-issues](https://www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla/y/driving-and-medical-issues)
Driving agency in Great Britain.

Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA)

Drivers' enquiries: 0300 200 7861
nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/driving-licences/medical-conditions
Driving agency in Northern Ireland.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Advice line: 0808 800 0082
equalityhumanrights.com
Promoting and upholding equality and human rights ideals and laws across England, Scotland, and Wales.

Financial Ombudsman Service

Consumer helpline: 0800 023 4567
financial-ombudsman.org.uk
Guidance about problems with insurance.

Epilepsy Society is grateful to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) who have reviewed this information.

For a printed copy of this information contact our helpline.

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