

# DRIVING AFTER A STROKE

A stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA) may affect your ability to move, see, remember or concentrate. This may make it difficult or unsafe for you to drive, at least temporarily.

For safety reasons, the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) has strict guidelines about who may and may not drive.

Your GP will be able to tell you if you need to inform the DVLA about your stroke. He / she should also be able to give you advice on whether you should drive while medical enquiries are being made. Full information is available on the government website: [www.direct.gov.uk/driverhealth](http://www.direct.gov.uk/driverhealth)

## HOW TO NOTIFY THE DVLA

To notify the DVLA of your medical condition you can:

- Contact the:  
Drivers Medical Group, DVLA Swansea, SA99 1TU  
Tel: 0300 790 6806 | Fax: 0845 850 0095  
(Mon - Fri: 8.00am to 5.30pm; Sat: 8.00am to 1.00pm)  
Email: [eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk)
- Download an appropriate questionnaire from the A-Z section on:  
[www.direct.gov.uk/DrivingAndMedicalConditions](http://www.direct.gov.uk/DrivingAndMedicalConditions)



The DVLA booklet 'Customer Service Guide for Drivers with Medical Conditions' INF 94 provides lots of clear information. Available from Post Offices or local DVLA offices.

## GROUP 1 LICENCE HOLDERS – Motor cars and motorcycles

- You are **not** allowed to drive for at least one month after a stroke or a TIA\*
- After a month **if you are considered fit to drive by your doctor and you have a valid driving licence** you may resume driving. In this case you **do not** have to notify the DVLA\*\*
- After a month, if you are still **not** considered fit to drive by your doctor, then you **must notify the DVLA** and you cannot drive.
- You can choose to voluntarily surrender your licence by filling out a form (from the DVLA or online). This means that you do not intend to drive until your GP considers you safe to do so at a later date. No further action will be taken by the DVLA at this time.

### HEAD OFFICE

3rd Floor, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ

Tel: 0131 225 6963 Fax: 0131 220 6313 Advice Line: 0845 077 6000

E-mail: [admin@chss.org.uk](mailto:admin@chss.org.uk) Website: [www.chss.org.uk](http://www.chss.org.uk)

Scottish Charity No. SC018761

**This does not mean that your licence is revoked.**

If at a later date you wish to resume driving you must apply to the DVLA for your licence back. They will then seek information about your fitness to drive.

- If you do not choose to voluntarily surrender your licence to the DVLA then you will need to fill in a medical questionnaire (from the DVLA or online) which requests further information, about your condition, as well as your permission to contact your doctor if necessary. The DVLA will then begin its enquiries about your fitness to drive.

*\* If you have frequent TIAs you will be advised not to drive until you have had a three-month period free from attacks. If your doctor agrees that it is safe for you to drive after the recommended period you may do so while the DVLA is making enquiries and coming to a decision.*

*\*\* This makes it easier for you to resume driving if you had a minor stroke or a TIA and are fit to drive after the month has passed.*

**GROUP 2 LICENCE HOLDERS Lorries and buses**

The medical standards are much stricter in this category because of the size and weight of the vehicles and also the length of time you may spend at the wheel in the course of your occupation.

- The DVLA has to be notified and your licence will be revoked for at least 12 months following a stroke or TIA.
- Licensing can be considered after this period, subject to satisfactory medical reports, if you have a good recovery with no residual problems which are likely to affect driving.
- You will probably need to undergo further medical assessment by way of an exercise ECG to confirm cardiovascular fitness before a Group 2 licence is issued.

**Taxis**

The Transport Select Committee in 1995 recommended that local councils should apply Group 2 medical standards to taxi drivers. Therefore you should check with your local licensing council that you are still licensed to drive your taxi.

## YOUR DVLA ENQUIRY AND DECISION

A medical advisor at the DVLA will decide whether or not it is safe for you to drive. They will use the 'medical standards of fitness to drive' to help with their decision. In addition to your medical questionnaire they may decide that more information is required. The medical adviser may:



- contact your GP or consultant
- arrange for you to be independently assessed by a doctor on behalf of the DVLA
- refer you for a driving assessment through the Scottish Driving Assessment Service

**Note: A driving assessment is not a driving test. It is used to clarify whether you are ready to go back to driving or not.**

The following factors will be taken into consideration by the DVLA when they assess your fitness to drive:

- permanent damage to vision
- problems with memory, judgement or concentration
- slow reactions in an emergency
- weakness, altered sensation or spasm in an affected limb
- speech and language problems, namely understanding of spoken or written words\*
- fits, faints, dizzy turns or other causes of loss of consciousness

\* *Your licence will not be revoked on the grounds of speech impairment. The DVLA is concerned with your ability to drive safely at all times.*

Once the drivers' medical unit at the DVLA has all the information it needs, it will make a decision on whether you can drive. However this may take a few months. When a decision is made both you and your doctor will be informed.

The decision could be one of the following:

1. You keep your licence.
2. You are issued with a licence for a fixed period only.
3. You are issued with a licence that is coded to indicate the need for adaptations and / or special controls to allow you to drive.
4. Your licence is revoked.

## IF YOUR LICENCE IS REVOKED

If your condition improves and your doctor thinks you are now fit to drive you can re-apply for your licence.

If it is considered that you are still unsafe to drive your licence will remain revoked.

Be aware that the DVLA can also revoke your licence for non-compliance, for instance if you:

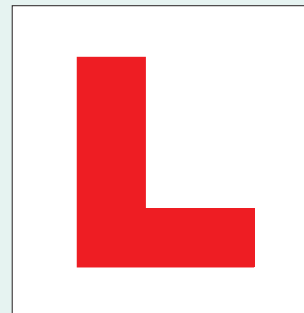
- fail to send back an appropriately completed questionnaire
- refuse permission for your doctor to be approached
- refuse to agree to any of the assessments requested

You are not allowed to drive until your licence is subsequently re-issued by the DVLA.

## PROVISIONAL DISABILITY ASSESSMENT LICENCE

If you are re-applying for your licence, after it has been revoked, the DVLA will have the option of issuing a Provisional Disability Assessment Licence (PDAL).

This will allow you to be fully assessed, including on road, by the Driving Assessment Service to determine your fitness to drive. The conditions of the licence may limit you to driving only for the duration of the assessment. You will be subject to learner conditions, such as 'L-plates', and driving under supervision. If the assessment is satisfactory, the DVLA may restore your licence.



## SCOTTISH DRIVING ASSESSMENT SERVICE

The Scottish Driving Assessment Service provides an assessment which will identify any problems caused by your stroke and make recommendations about your safety to return to driving.

This service also offers:

- Advice and help on any adaptations to your vehicle that may be necessary to enable you to drive after a stroke.
- Information about driving lessons to help you to regain confidence or to help you learn to manage an adapted vehicle.
- Advice and assessment for disabled passengers.



Your GP, hospital consultant or DVLA medical advisor can refer you to the service which is based at the Astley Ainslie Hospital in Edinburgh. You will be given the option of being assessed in Edinburgh or at one of the other centres covered by the mobile service: Inverness, Aberdeen, Paisley, Dumfries, Irvine and Dundee.

You cannot self-refer to the service but you can ask your doctor about being referred.

### **The Scottish Driving Assessment Service**

SMART Centre  
Astley Ainslie Hospital  
133 Grange Loan  
Edinburgh EH9 2HL  
Tel: 0131 537 9192

#### **Assessment for pavement vehicles**

It may be possible to arrange for an assessment to use a pavement vehicle (such as a scooter or motorised wheelchair) at one of the local Disabled Living Centres throughout the country.



## **INSURANCE**

If you are considered fit to drive and wish to resume driving you must let your insurance company know about your stroke or TIA and any modifications to your vehicle. If you fail to inform them, and have to make a claim, you may find you are not insured as some insurers oblige drivers to inform them of any changes to their personal circumstances. Your insurance company may want a doctor's report to say if it is safe for you to drive again. You may have to look for another company if they are unable to provide cover.

*See the CHSS factsheet 'Sympathetic insurance companies' for more information.*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT DRIVING LESSONS

You can only have driving lessons if you have a valid licence and your doctor has agreed you are fit to drive.

If you have **surrendered** your licence **or** your licence has **expired** and you wish to have driving lessons before you go back to driving, you are required to apply to the DVLA to obtain your licence. Once you have applied to DVLA and have documentation to say you have done so, you are able to have lessons under Section 88 of the Road Traffic Act if your doctor has agreed you are fit to drive.

**If your licence has been revoked you cannot have lessons.**

The DVLA may be unaware that you have had a stroke if you decided not to go back to driving. If at a later date you decide to do so you can only have lessons once you have informed the DVLA, have a valid driving licence and your doctor has agreed you are fit to drive.

### COST OF LESSONS

#### CHSS Personal Support Grants

The CHSS Personal Support Grants programme may be able to offer assistance with the cost of lessons. For more information about grants email: [personalgrants@chss.org.uk](mailto:personalgrants@chss.org.uk) or telephone: 0131 225 6963.

#### ‘Access to Work’

Drivers who have had a stroke and are trying to return to work could also ask ‘Access to Work’ for assistance. Ask the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at your local Jobcentre for more information.

## FURTHER REFERENCE

DVLA General Drivers Enquiries: Tel: 0300 790 6801

Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive are reviewed and updated every 6 months and are available on the DVLA website: [www.dvla.gov.uk/medical/ataglance](http://www.dvla.gov.uk/medical/ataglance)

For further information about motoring and transport issues see: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

- ‘Motoring: Your health and driving’
- ‘Disabled people: Motoring and transport’

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