

Chest
Heart &
Stroke
Scotland



DRIVING

WITH A MEDICAL CONDITION



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

This Essential Guide is about driving with a medical condition.

It explains:

- The law around driving with a medical condition.
- What voluntary surrender of your licence means.
- What a DVLA medical investigation involves.
- The law around driving with chest, heart, or stroke conditions.
- Information on getting back to driving.

Information is taken from the DVLA guidance **“Assessing Fitness to Drive: A Guide for Medical Professionals”**.

The law around driving with a medical condition

By law, you must tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) about any medical condition that may affect your ability to drive safely. Your doctor (or a healthcare specialist with knowledge of your condition) will be able to tell you whether you need to inform the DVLA.

You can be fined up to £1,000 if you do not tell the DVLA about a medical condition that affects your ability to drive safely.

You may be prosecuted if you are involved in an accident as a result of your medical condition.



Telling the DVLA

For safety reasons, the DVLA has strict rules about who can and cannot drive.

If your doctor says you are not fit to drive, you must tell the DVLA and you must not drive.

If this is the case, you can either choose to voluntarily surrender your licence **or** allow the DVLA to conduct their own assessment and make a decision about your licence.

Information about how to contact the DVLA is included at the end of this guide.



Voluntary surrender of your licence

You can choose to voluntarily surrender your licence. This means you do not intend to drive until your doctor considers it safe for you to do so.

You will need to complete the DVLA form **"Declaration of Surrender for Medical Reasons"**. The DVLA will not take further action at this time.

If you would like to start driving again at a later date, you must apply to the DVLA for your licence back. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to drive while your application is with the DVLA.

For more information, see the DVLA guidance **"Can I drive while my application is with DVLA?"** You can find this by going to **www.gov.uk** and searching for **"INF188/6"**.

DVLA medical investigation

The DVLA will conduct an investigation to consider anything related to your health that may affect your driving. For this investigation:

- You must complete a medical questionnaire.
- Your doctor and specialist may need to provide information - the DVLA will need your permission to request this.
- You may have to be independently assessed by another doctor and/or need to attend the Scottish Driving Assessment Service for a driving assessment.

If you are reapplying for your licence after voluntary surrender, you will also need to complete a driving licence application form.

After the investigation, the Drivers Medical Group at the DVLA will make a decision about your licence. It may take a few months before you find out the result.

The decision could be one of the following:

 You keep your licence.



You are given a licence for a fixed time period only. When this period ends, you can reapply for another licence, and the DVLA will check that you now meet the medical standards for driving.



You are given a special licence that requires vehicle adaptations and/or special controls.



Your licence is revoked (taken away).

If your condition improves to a point where your doctor thinks you are safe to drive again, you can reapply for a revoked or refused licence.

Provisional Disability Assessment Licence

If you reapply for a licence after it is revoked, the DVLA may issue you with a Provisional Disability Assessment Licence (PDAL)

The PDAL allows you to take an on-road driving assessment and, where appropriate, allows for a re-training period before the assessment.

The Scottish Driving Assessment Service will conduct the assessment. This is **not** a driving test. It is used to find out whether you are ready to go back to driving.

After your assessment, your assessor will produce a report on your driving.

A copy of this report will go to a DVLA medical doctor, who will use this report and any other medical information to make a decision about your driving.

Driving with a health condition

If you have been diagnosed with a long-term chest or heart condition, or if you have had a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or stroke, your doctor can advise you whether you need to tell the DVLA.

If you do not have to tell the DVLA, you may still have to stop driving for a set amount of time. Whether this is necessary will depend on your condition, your symptoms, and what sort of licence you have. Ask your doctor if you are unsure whether this affects you.

Even if you can continue to drive, you must be sure that you are always able to safely control a vehicle. If you have any concerns about your ability to drive safely, speak to your GP.

The following pages go into more detail about specific conditions.

Driving with a long-term chest condition

If you have a long-term chest condition, there are **no legal restrictions to your driving**. You do not need to tell the DVLA unless you regularly experience dizziness, fainting, or loss of consciousness.

If you use oxygen and **transport your oxygen cylinders or an oxygen concentrator in your car**, you should tell your insurance provider. This should not affect your insurance premiums.



Your oxygen should always be secured when driving, and placed in the car boot when not in use.

You should **never** use your oxygen cylinder or concentrator while fuelling the car, as this is a major fire hazard.

Driving with a heart condition

The impact of a heart condition will depend on the type of licence you hold and the condition you have.

Category 1: Car/motorcycle licence

You do not need to tell the DVLA if you have had any of the following:

- a heart attack
- coronary artery bypass surgery
- heart valve disease or heart valve surgery
- angina.

While you do not need to tell the DVLA about these conditions, you may still have to stop driving until your doctor or specialist tells you it is safe.

Rules for selected heart conditions

If your heart condition causes sudden dizziness or fainting, you **must** tell the DVLA and **must stop driving** until you are told by a doctor or specialist that it is safe to do so.

These rules also apply to conditions that have led to you getting a **pacemaker** or **implantable cardioverter defibrillator** (ICD) fitted. You **must tell the DVLA** if you have been fitted with either of these. Being fitted with an ICD requires that you do not drive for 1-6 months afterwards.

Acute coronary syndrome, including a heart attack or heart operation



You do not have to tell the DVLA but must stop driving for at least 1 week (if the treatment has been successful and there are no further symptoms) or 1 month (if you do not have explicit medical approval).

Angina

You do not have to tell the DVLA and can continue to drive, **except** if you are having symptoms. If this happens, you must stop driving until the symptoms are under control.

Coronary angioplasty

You do not have to tell the DVLA but if you must stop driving for at least **1 week** if the angioplasty has been successful, or at least 4 weeks if it has not been successful.

www.gov.uk/heart-attacks-and-driving

has more information on driving after a heart attack or angioplasty.

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD)

If you have experienced an SCAD, you must not drive for at least **4 weeks**, but do not need to tell the DVLA unless you also have other symptoms.

Heart failure

Most people with heart failure do not have to inform the DVLA or stop driving.

If you have symptoms which affect your ability to drive (e.g. dizziness, visual disturbances, or fainting), or if you have been diagnosed with **class IV heart failure**, you must **inform the DVLA** and may not be able to drive.

Heart arrhythmias

A heart arrhythmia is any abnormality in your heartbeat. You should stop driving until and unless your arrhythmia is controlled for **at least 4 weeks**. If you experience arrhythmia while driving, pull over at the first opportunity and do not drive until the symptoms are gone.

If you have an **uncontrolled arrhythmia** or if it causes **symptoms** which may affect your driving (such as dizziness or fainting), you need to **inform the DVLA**.

Pacemaker implant

You must **inform the DVLA** if you have had a pacemaker installed, and stop driving for at least **1 week** after it is put in.

Implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)

If you have had an ICD implanted, then you must not drive for at least **6 weeks** after it is put in, and you must **inform the DVLA**.

Aortic aneurysm

If you have had an aortic aneurysm larger than 6cm (ask your doctor if you are not sure), you **must inform the DVLA**. Whether you can drive will depend on your symptoms and the size of the aneurysm.

Aortic dissection

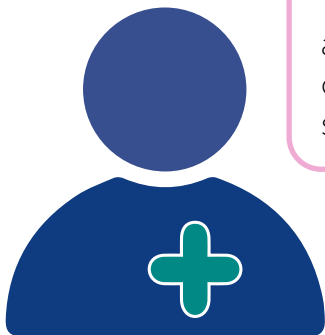
If you have been diagnosed with aortic dissection, you must **inform the DVLA** and **stop driving**. You may be able to reapply for your licence after successful surgery.

Group 2: Bus, coach or lorry licence

For most heart conditions, if you have a bus, coach, or lorry licence, you will need to tell the DVLA and may have your licence revoked.

If you are actively experiencing symptoms of angina or other heart problems, do not drive.

In some cases, after a set amount of time, you can be assessed by either your GP or the DVLA to let you know whether you are allowed to drive again. For instance, if you have not had angina symptoms for six months, you can reapply for your licence.



Your GP should be able to advise you on the rules for your specific condition.

If you have an ICD (implantable coronary defibrillator), you **cannot hold a Group 2 driving licence** or drive a heavy vehicle.

You must notify the DVLA of your heart condition as soon as you are diagnosed. You must notify the DVLA of any heart surgery or treatment as soon as possible. If you are applying for a Group 2 licence for the first time, you must inform the DVLA of any past heart diagnoses or treatments.

There are a few heart conditions which you do not have to report to the DVLA:

- **high blood pressure**, provided that your systolic pressure is below 180mmHg and your diastolic pressure is below 100mmHg
- **asymptomatic heart valve disease**
- **mild to moderate aortic stenosis.**

Any other heart condition, or any condition that causes dizziness, faintness, or distraction, has to be reported.

Driving after a stroke or TIA

A stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA) can affect your ability to drive safely.

Your ability to drive after a stroke or TIA will depend on your condition, your symptoms, and the type of licence you hold.

Disability of your arms and legs does not necessarily have to stop you from driving. In some cases, vehicles may be adapted to allow you to continue to drive. If there are rules placed on what adaptations vehicles must have for you to drive them, these must be shown on your driving licence.

As with heart conditions, the effects of a stroke or TIA will depend on licence type. The following pages cover these differences.

See **www.gov.uk/stroke-and-driving** for further information.

Group 1: Car or motorcycle licence

You should not drive for at least 1 month after a stroke or a single TIA. You do not need to notify the DVLA.



If you have had more than one TIA, then you must not drive until it has been more than a month since your **most recent** TIA.

You only need to tell the DVLA if:

you still have complications affecting your ability to drive safely 1 month after your stroke or TIA

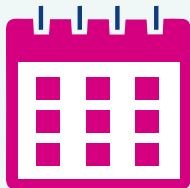
you have had any kind of seizure

you needed brain surgery as a result of your stroke

anyone providing you medical care is concerned about your ability to drive safely.

Group 2: Bus, coach or lorry licence

If you have had a stroke or TIA, you must tell the DVLA. Your licence will be revoked for at least 12 months.



You may be able to reapply for your licence after this time if you have no ongoing complications and are safe to drive.

Relicensing may depend on medical reports and tests, including an exercise ECG.

If you have had more than one stroke or TIA, you will have to have functional cardiac tests to see whether it is likely to happen again.

Group 3: Taxi licence

The Transport Select Committee recommends that local councils apply the same restrictions after a stroke or TIA to a taxi licence as to Group 2 licence holders.

This means that you must tell the DVLA and your Group 3 licence will be revoked for at least 12 months.



Check with your local licensing council what the restrictions are in your area.

Getting back to driving

Scottish Driving Assessment Service

The **SMART** Scottish Driving Assessment Service offers driving assessments. This may be required as part of the DVLA fitness to drive investigation.

The **SMART** assessment service is based at Astley Ainslie hospital in Edinburgh. The service also offers information and advice on driving for people who have a medical condition, have been injured, or have a disability. This includes information on vehicle adaptations and driving lessons. You need to be referred to this service by your doctor (GP or hospital specialist) or by a DVLA doctor. You can find out more online at

www.smart.scot.nhs.uk/service/driving-assessment.

Medical assessment outside Lothian

If you do not live in or near Lothian, it may be difficult for you to attend the Scottish Driving Assessment Centre.

If this is the case, ask your doctor or specialist health professional whether there are alternatives for driving assessment. You may be able to be assessed by your GP or at a local hospital.

Alternative transport

While you are unable to drive, it may be helpful to look into alternatives.

You can find information on a range of public transport, and help planning journeys, at **www.travelinescotland.com**.

It may also be helpful to ask family and friends for help with transport.

Driving lessons

You may find refresher driving lessons helpful to rebuild your confidence.

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

If you have surrendered your licence or it has expired, you must apply to the DVLA and obtain a valid licence before starting lessons.

Section 88 of the Road Traffic Act may allow you to drive while the DVLA consider your licence application. More information is in the DVLA guidance "Can I drive while my licence is with the DVLA?" You can find this by going to **www.gov.uk** and searching for "**INF188/6**".

It is up to a driver to decide whether Section 88 applies to them.

Insurance

You must let your insurance company know about any medical condition you have that may affect your ability to drive. You must also tell them about any adaptations to your vehicle, and about any oxygen equipment you carry regularly.

Your insurance company may require a doctor's report to say it is safe for you to drive.

You may also have to look around for an insurance company that will cover you. Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland has a factsheet which lists insurance companies who may be able to insure you with a long-term health condition.



Blue Badge scheme

The Blue Badge scheme allows people with difficulties getting around to park closer to where they need to go. Blue Badges are also known as disabled parking permits.

You can apply for a Blue Badge online from your local council. You may be charged up to £20 for a Blue Badge.

Visit www.mygov.scot/transport-travel/park-permit for more information.



DVLA contact details and further information

DVLA general driver licensing enquiries

Tel: 0300 790 6801

Web: www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla

DVLA medical enquiries and declaration of a medical condition questionnaires

Tel: 0300 790 6806

Web: www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving

Postal address: Drivers' Medical Enquiries,
DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1TU

Visit **www.gov.uk/browse/driving** for more information on driving and transport issues, including driving with a disability or medical condition, the Blue Badge scheme and using public transport if you are disabled.

Our publications are available for free to anyone in Scotland who needs them. Go to www.chss.org.uk/resources-hub for all our resources, including other Essential Guides in this series.

For free, confidential advice and support from our **Advice Line nurses**, call: 0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm), text: NURSE to 66777 or email: adviceline@chss.org.uk.

Across Scotland, over one million people – that's one in five of us – are living with the effects of a chest, heart or stroke condition. We are here to help everyone who needs us. But we need your support to do this. Go to www.chss.org.uk/supportus to find out how you can help more people in Scotland.

If you would like this resource in an alternative format, please contact our Advice Line nurses.

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