

*epilepsy scotland*

Scotland's voice for epilepsy



# **Epilepsy and driving**

**Helpline: 0808 800 2200**

**[www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk](http://www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk)**

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## Epilepsy and driving

You may find it very difficult to come to terms with losing your driving licence after a seizure. Most people's seizures stop with medication so you may only need to give up your licence for 12 months. While you are without your licence you are entitled to free bus travel throughout Scotland and concessionary fares on local train services. You can also buy a Disabled person's railcard which gives you one third off long distance rail fares throughout the UK.

### What the law says

People with epilepsy can drive if the legal requirements described below are met. Your doctor will also have to agree you are safe to drive. The rules also apply to people who have had a seizure even if they are not diagnosed with epilepsy.

The rules below refer to any type of seizure, even ones where you do not lose awareness.

### Ordinary driving licence

You will be given an ordinary driving licence if:

- you have not had a seizure (with or without taking medication) for at least one year before the licence is due to take effect;
- or**
- after three years, if you continue to have seizures only when you are asleep, and only if you have not had seizures of any kind while awake in those three years.

The licence you are given after 12 months without seizures will last between one and three years. It will then need to be renewed. Once you have had no seizures for seven years, whether you take medication or not, you will be given a licence lasting until you are 70.

- **One-off seizures**

If you only have one seizure and have no more for 12 months, then the Driving Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) may decide to give you back a licence which will last until you are 70.

- **Provoked seizures**

The driving rules may be slightly different when a seizure is provoked. A provoked seizure is caused by an unusual event which normally will not happen again. In this situation, DVLA may allow you to drive sooner than the 12 months if the cause of the seizure can be found and either removed or treated. For example, if you have a seizure seconds after a head injury. Your doctor, epilepsy specialist nurse and DVLA will tell you more.



## LGV/PCV licences

You can be given an LGV (Large Goods Vehicle) or PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle) licence if:



- you have been seizure-free for ten years; **and**
- you have had no treatment for epilepsy for at least ten years; **and**
- DVLA medical advisers also need to be satisfied that seizures are no longer likely to happen.

## Mopeds and motorcycles

You need a licence for all types of mopeds and motorcycles. The medical requirements are the same as for a car licence.

## Taxi licences

The Medical Commission on Accident Prevention recommends that people are free of seizures for ten years without medication before they are given a taxi licence. These are only recommendations. It is up to your local authority whether they use these guidelines. Some local authorities award taxi licences to people who have been free of seizures for twelve months with or without taking medication. Call our Helpline on **0808 800 2200** for more information.



## Things you need to know about driving licences

### New drivers



If you have epilepsy and are applying for a driving licence for the first time, you must fill in application form (D1) for a provisional driving licence. You can get this from DVLA's ordering service or most post offices. You will have to answer questions about your epilepsy on the application form.

### Existing licence holders

If you already hold a driving licence and have a seizure you must stop driving right away. This applies to any type of seizure, whether you have it while awake or asleep. You must tell DVLA who will revoke your licence. You must also tell your insurance company.

If you only have seizures while asleep, you will get your ordinary driving licence back after three years. This is reviewed after another three years. You do not need to tell DVLA if your seizures still happen only when you are asleep.

### Changing or stopping your medication

If you are changing or stopping your medication, you will need to stop driving until your doctor says it is safe to start again. If your doctor is stopping your medication, DVLA recommend that you stop driving during the time your medication is being withdrawn and for six months after.

### How do DVLA make their decision?

As the driver, you must tell DVLA as soon as you have a seizure. If you drive without DVLA approval you are breaking the law and your insurance will be invalid. Once you have told DVLA about your seizure, they will ask you for permission to contact your doctor. They may ask you to go to an examination with one of their medical advisors. After that DVLA will write to you with their decision. If your licence is withdrawn, you must return it to DVLA. Their telephone number is **0870 600 0301** ([www.direct.gov.uk/motoring](http://www.direct.gov.uk/motoring)).

If you had a seizure in the past but did not know to contact DVLA at the time, you should do this now. This is to make sure you are covered for any future car insurance you may have.

### Appeals against a DVLA decision

You can appeal against a decision made by DVLA by contacting your local Sheriff Court.

### Getting your driving licence back

To get your driving licence back, you should contact DVLA a few months before you are due to start driving again. You need to write to DVLA telling them that you want to reapply for your licence. If you know your old driving licence number, you should tell them in the letter. DVLA will then send you a questionnaire and will ask you for the name of your doctor. You don't need to take another driving test but you may find it helpful to have a few refresher lessons.

## Ways to be a safer driver

It is important for any driver to be safe. If you have epilepsy, you need to take extra measures to stay safe on the road:

- avoid driving when you are tired
- avoid driving for many hours at a time
- do not go for long periods without food or sleep
- do not drive if you have missed a dose of your epilepsy medication
- do not drive if the side effects of your medication affect your ability to drive safely
- do not drink alcohol and drive
- if you take epilepsy medication even small amounts of alcohol can affect your ability to drive.

## Car insurance



If you have epilepsy you may find car insurance is expensive. Insurers should not charge you more just because you have epilepsy. It is worth shopping around. Call our Helpline on **0808 800 2200** if you have any problems finding insurance.

## Driving abroad

The driving rules in this leaflet are for the UK. If you would like to drive abroad the rules may be different. Check these out before you go.

## Discounted travel

You are entitled to free bus travel in Scotland and concessionary fares on local trains if:

- you are unable to drive for medical reasons (ie a seizure);  
**or**
- you receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (higher mobility or higher or middle care).

## Scotland-wide free bus travel scheme

You need to apply for a National Entitlement Card to be able to travel free on local or long distance bus services. You can use the letter confirming that you get DLA as proof of entitlement. If you do not get DLA, you can get your consultant to sign a simple form confirming that you have had a seizure in the last 12 months. This will then entitle you to a free bus pass. For more information on this, contact our helpline, or visit our website **[www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk](http://www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk)**.



## Disabled person's railcard

You can buy a Disabled person's railcard if you take epilepsy medication but continue to have seizures. This gives you and a companion up to a third off UK train fares. You can call the Disabled person's railcard helpline on **0845 605 0525** for more information.



## Discounted travel for companion

If you receive certain benefits, you may also be entitled to discounted travel for a companion. Contact your local Social Work Department for information.



## Access to work scheme

If you need to drive to work, the Access to work scheme may be able to offer you help with extra travel costs. Contact your local Job Centre for information.

## Futher information

Epilepsy Scotland can give you further information on:

Factsheets:	Guides:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnosis</li> <li>• Driving</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• First aid for seizures</li> <li>• Leisure</li> <li>• Memory</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Seizures</li> <li>• Treatment</li> <li>• Triggers (includes information on alcohol and photosensitive epilepsy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A guide to epilepsy - what you need to know</li> <li>• Epilepsy and later life</li> <li>• A parent's guide to epilepsy</li> <li>• Men and epilepsy</li> <li>• A woman's guide to epilepsy</li> <li>• Guidelines for teachers</li> <li>• An employer's guide to epilepsy</li> <li>• Looking after someone with epilepsy and learning difficulties</li> </ul>

We also have information leaflets designed for people with learning difficulties. These include:

- All about epilepsy
- Safety and epilepsy
- Living with epilepsy



If you have questions after reading this leaflet, please call our Helpline. Our trained staff are available during office hours and until 6pm on Thursdays.

If you would like this leaflet in a different format or language, please call **0808 800 2200**.

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