

Epilepsy and driving

Losing your driving licence after a seizure can be difficult to cope with and may have a big impact on your life. Up to 70% of people with epilepsy can have their seizures completely controlled with the right medication. You may only need to give up your ordinary driving licence for 12 months, although stricter rules apply for HGV and PGV licences. 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. There are different rules depending on the type of seizure, so if you do not lose consciousness during seizures you may be able to get your licence back.

Ordinary driving licence

You may 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**
- you have established a pattern for one year or more of only having seizures when you are asleep, but you must never have had any kind of seizure while awake. If this pattern is broken by any kind of awake seizure, you must stop driving immediately and tell the DVLA. You do not need to tell the DVLA if your seizures still only happen when you are asleep; **or**
- you have previously had awake seizures, but for at least three years have only had seizures while asleep. This means, if you continue to have sleep seizures after this

period of time, you may start driving again. However, as soon as you have any kind of seizure while awake, you must stop driving immediately and notify the DVLA; **or**

- you have seizures that do not affect your level of consciousness and these would not affect your ability to control a vehicle, you may get your licence back after one year, while continuing to have these seizures. However, you must never have had a different type of seizure. If you do have any other type of seizure, then you must stop driving immediately and tell the DVLA.

The licence you are given after 12 months will last between one and three years. It will then need to be renewed. After holding a licence for five years, whether you take medication or not, you may be given a licence lasting until you are 70.

One-off (isolated) seizures

If you have had one single seizure, you may get your ordinary driving licence back after six months if the following applies to you:

- you have only ever had one seizure;
- your EEG and brain scan were clear;
- you do not need to take anti-epileptic drugs;
- your neurologist thinks you will be safe to drive after six months.

Otherwise you can apply to get your licence back after one year if you have only had one seizure and have had no more during the 12 months period.

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, the 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 the DVLA will tell you more.

LGV/PCV licences: isolated one-off seizure

If you have had one single isolated seizure, you may get your LGV (Large Goods Vehicle) /PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle) licence back after five years if the following applies to you:

- you have only had one seizure;
- your EEG and brain scan were clear;
- you do not need to take anti-epileptic drugs;
- your risk of further seizures is considered by your neurologist to be two percent or less per annum;
- you are not otherwise considered to be a source of danger while driving.

LGV/PCV licences: diagnosis of epilepsy

If you have a diagnosis of epilepsy, you may be given an LGV or PCV 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 are 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

It is up to your local authority which guidelines they use for taxi licensing, and taxi drivers should contact their local authority for advice regarding these standards. Some local authorities award taxi licences to people who have been seizure free for twelve months with or without taking medication, but others may be a lot stricter.

Forklift Trucks and farm machinery

If you plan to drive a forklift truck or farm machinery on a public highway, you will need a full licence. The type of licence required will depend on the size of vehicle involved. If you

are driving on private land, you do not need a driving licence, but it is important to check you are insured. If your seizures are not well controlled, you could be putting yourself or others at risk by driving. If this is the case there may be restrictions under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Other issues regarding your driving licence

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 from 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 also tell the DVLA about your seizure. If you surrender your licence voluntarily you may resume driving sooner than if the DVLA revokes your licence. You must also tell your insurance company.

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, the DVLA recommend that you stop driving during the time your medication is being withdrawn and for six months after.

If you have a seizure due to a prescribed change of your medication or due to withdrawal of medication on the advice of your doctor, you can reapply for your licence when:

1. you have returned to your previous medication for six months; **and**
2. you have been seizure free for six months.

How do the DVLA make their decision?

As the driver, you must tell the 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 the DVLA about your seizure, you will have to complete a questionnaire and provide consent for the DVLA to contact your doctor for further information. After that the DVLA will write to you with their decision.

If your licence is withdrawn, you must return it to the DVLA. Their telephone number is 0300 790 6806 for car or motorcycle medical enquires, or 0300 790 6807 for bus, coach or lorry medical enquiries. More information can be found on the www.gov.uk website

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. If you fail to notify the DVLA about a medical condition that affects your driving you can be fined up to £1000. Also you may be prosecuted if you're involved in an accident as a result.

Appeals against a DVLA decision

You can appeal against a decision made by the DVLA by contacting your local Sheriff Court. The DVLA will send you a note explaining your rights to appeal and how to go about it. The appeal needs to be made within 21 days through a summary application and lodged with the Sheriff Court by a solicitor.

Getting your driving licence back

You may apply to the DVLA up to eight weeks before you are due to get your licence back. You can download the application forms from their website or contact the DVLA and request an application form to be sent to you. The DVLA will then send you a questionnaire and will ask you for the name of your doctor. You do not need to take another driving test but some people may find it helpful to have a few refresher lessons.

Safe driving

It is important for any driver to be safe. If you have epilepsy, you often 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 can be expensive. Insurers should not charge you more just because you have epilepsy, but they can charge you more if they consider you to be a higher risk than someone without epilepsy. It is worth shopping around to compare quotes. Call our helpline on 0808 800 2200 if you have any problems finding insurance.

Driving abroad

The driving regulations in this factsheet are for the UK only. If you want to drive abroad, check out the country's driving regulations before you go. Some countries may have stricter driving regulations for people with epilepsy.

Discounted travel

Scotland wide free bus pass scheme

If you meet the minimum age requirement for a UK driving licence (aged 16 and over) and have had a seizure within the last 12 months, you are entitled to a free National Entitlement Card (bus pass). This gives you free bus travel in Scotland and concessionary fares on some

local trains. Our helpline can give you more information on how to apply, just call 0808 800 2200.

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 or our helpline 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 or check out the www.gov.uk website for more information.

More Information

Driving regulations can be complicated, but it is important to comply with the law. If you continue to drive when you should not:

- your licence may not be valid;
- your insurance may not be valid;
- there may be an increased chance of causing an accident;
- you could be breaking the law and face prosecution;
- you could be facing a lengthy prison sentence if you kill or seriously injure someone when driving against DVLA and medical advice.

If you need more clarification on the driving regulations, please call our helpline on 0808 800 2200. All calls are confidential.