

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 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.

If you are not sure whether or not to tell the DVLA about your stroke, ask your GP. He or 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/emaildvla

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.

HOW TO NOTIFY THE DVLA

To notify the DVLA of your medical condition contact the Drivers Medical Group: Tel: 0300 790 6806.

Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 5.30 pm and Saturday, 8.00am to 1.00pm

Fax: 0845 850 0095

Email: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

Write or send documents to: DVLA Swansea, SA99 1TU



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 full 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.
- The DVLA will send you a questionnaire to fill in requesting:
 - a) your permission to contact your doctor for further information about your condition if necessary and
 - b) offering you different options about how to proceed.
- One of the options given will be to temporarily surrender your licence. 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

65 North Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3LT

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

E-mail: admin@chss.org.uk Website: www.chss.org.uk

Scottish Charity No. SCO18761

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 at the time of notification you do not choose to surrender your licence the DVLA will immediately begin its enquiries about your fitness to drive. If you are not yet fit to drive the DVLA may revoke your licence.

** 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 inquiries and coming to a decision.*

*** This makes it easier for those who have had a very mild stroke or a TIA, who are able to drive after the month has passed to do so.*

YOUR DVLA ENQUIRY AND DECISION

The Medical Advisors at the DVLA will base their decision on whether you go back to driving or not on the information you provide and various reports and assessments.

Your GP, Consultant and/or other Health Professional may be asked for a report on your condition and whether they consider it safe for you to drive.



If your doctor feels unable to decide or it is unclear from a report:

- You may be independently assessed by a doctor on behalf of the DVLA
- Your GP or DVLA may 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 driving licence has been revoked because you were not fit to drive but your condition subsequently improves, you can reapply for a licence with your doctors support.

If it is considered that you are not safe to resume driving 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 a licence is subsequently issued by the DVLA.

PROVISIONAL DISABILITY ASSESSMENT LICENCE

When a driver whose licence has been revoked applies to have a licence reissued, the DVLA will have the option of issuing a Provisional Disability Assessment Licence (PDAL).

This will allow the driver to be assessed on road by the Driving Assessment Service to determine fitness to drive. The conditions of the licence may limit the holder to driving only for the duration of the assessment. The driver will be subject to learner conditions such as L-plates, and driving under supervision. If the assessment is satisfactory, the DVLA may restore the full 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 then be given the option of being assessed there or at one of the other centres covered by the Mobile Service which visits these sites regularly in: 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

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 for using a pavement vehicle (such as a scooter or motorised wheelchair) at local Disabled Living Centres throughout the country.



INSURANCE

When 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 CHSS Factsheet 'Sympathetic Insurance Companies'.

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 the driver may spend at the wheel in the course of his/her occupation.

- The DVLA has to be notified and the licence will be revoked for at least 12 months following the stroke or TIA.
- Licensing can be considered after this period if there is a satisfactory recovery with no residual problems likely to affect driving and subject to satisfactory medical reports.
- The driver will probably need to undergo further medical assessment by way of an Exercise Tolerance Test (ETT) 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT DRIVING LESSONS

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

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

If a licence has been revoked a driver cannot have lessons.

The DVLA may be unaware that someone has had a stroke because the driver had decided not to go back to driving. If at a later date the driver decides to do so, they can only have lessons once they have informed DVLA, have a valid driving licence and their doctor has agreed they are fit to drive.

COST OF LESSONS

CHSS Personal Support Grants

The CHSS Personal Support Grants may be able to offer assistance with the cost of lessons. Ask about grants on 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. Apply at your local Job Centre.

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

For further information about motoring and transport issues see: www.direct.gov.uk

- ‘Disabled People’
- ‘How to tell the DVLA about a medical condition’

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