

DRIVING AFTER A STROKE

For safety reasons, the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) has strict guidelines about who may and may not drive. A stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA) may cause damage to part of the brain and affect your ability to move, see, remember or concentrate. This may make it difficult or unsafe to drive, at least temporarily.

Group 1 Licence Holders – Motor cars and motorcycles

- Anyone who has had a stroke or a TIA* is obliged to refrain from driving for at least a month.
- You may resume driving after a month if you are deemed fit to drive by your doctor. **
- If after this month has passed, you are **not** considered well enough to drive, then the DVLA have to be notified.
- Once the DVLA has been notified, you are effectively not allowed to drive any more and an assessment will have to be made in order to allow you to return to driving at any point in the future.
- To do this the DVLA will send you a questionnaire to fill in and ask your permission to contact your doctor for further information about your condition, if necessary.

** If you have frequent TIA's 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 is a recent change in regulations that makes it easier for those who have had a very mild stroke or a TIA, and are able to drive after the month has passed to do so.*

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Group 2 Licence Holders – Lorries and buses

The medical standards are much higher 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 refusal recommended for at least 12 months following the stroke or TIA.
- Licencing **can be** considered after this period if there is a full and complete recovery and there are no other risk factors, subject to satisfactory medical reports.

Taxi Drivers

The DVLA recommends 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.

If you or your physician would like further clarification, or are unsure whether notification is required, advice can be obtained from the Drivers Medical Unit, DVLA, Longview Road, Swansea SA6 7JL Tel: 0870 600 0301.

Insurance

When you are considered 'fit to drive' and wish to resume driving following a stroke or TIA, you should let your insurance company know.

You must also inform them if you make any vehicle modifications to enable you to drive after your stroke. If you fail to inform them, and have to make a claim, you may find you are not insured, as some insurers oblige holders to advise 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 start driving again. You may find you have to look for another company if they are unable to provide cover.

Once the DVLA has been notified

The DVLA will base their decision about returning your licence to you on the information you provide and various assessments. Your GP or consultant may be asked for a report on your condition and whether they consider you safe to drive.

If your doctor feels unable to decide whether you are fit to drive, or it is not clear from the report, you may be independently assessed by a GP on behalf of the DVLA. The DVLA will explain how this can be arranged. If, for any reason, this assessment is still inconclusive the DVLA can arrange for you to be assessed at a local accredited

mobility centre near you. If there is not a centre near by they can arrange for a free driving test.

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 and concentration
- Slow reactions in an emergency
- Spasm in a paralysed limb which cannot be controlled
- Fits or convulsions

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.

Losing your licence

If it is considered not safe for you to continue 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, if you refuse permission for your doctor to be approached or if you refuse to agree to any of the assessments requested.

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.

Driving Assessment Centre

A driving assessment identifies any problems caused by your stroke and helps you find ways of dealing with them. All referrals for driving assessment in Scotland are done through the centre in the Astley Ainslie Hospital in Edinburgh. You are then given the option of being seen in Inverness, Glasgow, Paisley, Dumfries, Irvine or Dundee at the Mobile Driving Assessment Unit, which visits these sites regularly.

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 and information about driving lessons to help you to regain confidence or to help you learn to manage an adapted vehicle is also available.

The Edinburgh Driving Assessment Service
Astley Ainslie Hospital
133 Grange Loan
Edinburgh
EH9 2HL
Tel: 0131 537 9192

This specialised service is part of the Disabled Living Centre in Edinburgh. It may be possible to arrange assessment for a pavement vehicle, scooters or wheelchairs at some other **Disabled Living Centres** throughout the country.

Provisional Assessment Licence

Recent changes have been introduced by the DVLA, so that when a driver applies to have a full licence returned, the DVLA will have the option of issuing a provisional 'Assessment Licence', which will allow them to take an on-road test to determine their fitness to drive.

Applicants will be subject to 'learner' conditions (such as L-plates, driving under supervision and no motorway driving), as well as specific rules. They can only drive for the purpose of the on-road assessment, following a period of practice and then retraining if needed. If the assessment is satisfactory, the DVLA will restore the full licence.



If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence,
please call the Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland Advice Line
Monday - Friday 9.30am - 12.30 and 1.30pm - 4.00pm

0845 077 6000