

Driving and brain tumours

Information sheet 14

Driving - losing your licence

This guide is for car or motorcycle drivers.

For more information about Group Two licences – i.e. large goods vehicle or passenger carrying vehicles, look at motoring and medical rules for all drivers on <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/index.htm>.

Will my tumour affect my driving?

You may not be allowed to drive for a period of time after you have had a brain tumour. Whether you lose your licence and for how long depends on the type of brain tumour you have and on where it was in the brain.

Will I lose my licence and if so, for how long?

Whether or not you lose your licence and for how long is determined by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) as set out in a document for medical professionals called At a glance guide to the current medical standards of fitness to drive.

Epileptic attacks or seizures:

You cannot drive for at least six months after you have had a seizure at any point. However, you may be able to start driving again after six months if you are declared medically fit to drive by your consultant. The only exception to this is if you have had a fit while you were sleeping and have previously had a fit during sleep, with a three-year period after it that was free from waking fits.

If you have a seizure while asleep but haven't previously had a sleeping fit followed by three years with no fits while awake, then you still have to stop driving for a year.

Intrafentorial tumours or tumours in the cerebellum:

If you have had a an infratentorial brain tumour or a tumour in the cerebellum, you can usually drive again as soon as you are over your treatment and can keep your up to 70-years-old licence, as long as the DVLA doctors find that you are unlikely to suffer more seizures, or have other problems which could affect your ability to drive.

Benign neuroma or schwannoma:

If you have had a benign acoustic neuroma or schwannoma, you don't have to tell the DVLA at all unless it has caused any dizziness.

If you have had any other type of benign brain tumour anywhere else in your brain, you cannot drive for six months starting from the date of completion of the primary treatment. Then you will be given a

short term licence (probably for three years). After three years, you will be assessed again, and may have your until 70-years-old licence returned.

If you have had a Grade 1 benign meningioma, you may be allowed to drive again after six months, provided you have not had any seizures. For a Grade 2 benign meningioma, the period is 12 months.

Pituitary tumours:

Generally speaking, you can drive again once you are fully recovered, however your tumour was treated, provided the tumour has not affected your vision.

The DVLA will need medical evidence that you are fit to drive before you get your licence back. So they will contact your specialist before you get your licence.

Glioma (including astrocytoma, ependymoma and oligodendroglioma):

If you had a Grade 1 or 2 glioma, you cannot drive for a year starting from the date of completion of the primary treatment. Then your situation will be reviewed and you may get your licence back.

If you had a Grade 3 or 4 glioma, you cannot drive for at least two years starting from the date of the completion of primary treatment. All these decisions are taken after consulting your specialist.

Primitive neuroectodermal tumours (PNET):

If you have had a low grade primitive neuroectodermal tumour completely removed with surgery, you cannot drive for a year starting from the date of completion of primary treatment. Your situation will then be reviewed by the DVLA. The most common type of PNET is medulloblastoma.

Metastatic tumours:

If you have a tumour spread from a cancer in the lungs, breast, kidney, thyroid, or otherwise, you have a 50% risk of having a seizure. Because of this risk you are not allowed to drive for at least two years.

Other tumours:

Any brain tumour, other than those listed above, normally means you cannot drive for two years.

If you had a brain tumour as a child:

If you had a brain tumour as a child, but you have grown up without any recurrence of the tumour, you can have a regular licence that will be valid until you are 70.

When do I tell the DVLA?

Once your doctor has told you that you have a brain tumour and you will not be able to drive, you **MUST** inform the DVLA. This is a legal obligation and failure to notify DVLA is a criminal offence and you could be fined up to £1000 for not doing so.

The sooner you tell the DVLA, the sooner the medical enquiries into your case can start, avoiding unnecessary delays.

You may also find that your insurance cover could be invalid in the event of a claim. If you don't inform the DVLA and carry on driving, anyone can report this to the driving agency. A doctor has a duty to protect your confidentiality as a patient. But over and above this, he or she has a duty of care to protect the public. So, your doctor may also tell the driving agency if you carry on driving when you should not.

What and how do I tell the DVLA?

Write a letter with as much detail as possible about your diagnosis, including:

- Your full name
- The type of tumour
- The date and circumstances of diagnosis
- Any treatment or surgery you have had and when you had it

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- The name and contact details of your consultant
 - Your date of birth
 - Your driving licence number

The more information the DVLA medical advisers have, the less need there is for investigation on their part and the quicker the process. Keep the DVLA informed of any subsequent treatments or developments in your case .

Surrendering your licence

You can decide if you want to hand in your licence to the DVLA. If you did not send your licence back voluntarily, the DVLA will send you a form to complete and ask your permission to contact your doctor for a medical report. They may ask for you to be examined by one of the DVLA's medical practitioners.

The DVLA will then write and tell you whether or not your licence is formally withdrawn or 'revoked' and for how long. They will also ask you to send your licence back.

It is better to hand in your licence voluntarily, because it speeds up the process when you want to get your licence back. If you have surrendered your licence, you can start driving as soon as you have lodged your application to get your licence back. This can be done two months before end of the period for which you had not been allowed to drive. This is not the case if your licence had been revoked. In this case you will have to wait until you are declared medically fit before you can start driving again.

Also see the section: [When can I start driving again?](#)

To surrender your licence, simply fill in a declaration of voluntary surrender, which you can send off with your letter informing the DVLA of your condition, as well as your current driving licence.

For more information or to download a declaration of voluntary surrenencer, visit: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/index.htm>.

It is a good idea to keep a photocopy of your licence as you will need this when you reapply for your licence at a later stage.

Where do I send the letter to?

Send your documents to:

Drivers Medical Group

DVLA

Swansea

SA99 1TU

You can contact the DVLA by phone, e-mail or fax as well, but you could be required to send a hard copy in any event.

Fax: 0845 850 0095

Email: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 790 6806 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5.30pm and Saturday, 8am to 1pm)

What happens next?

Once you have informed the DVLA of your condition, they will write back, asking for consent to contact your doctor or specialist. The DVLA medical advisers are unable to take a licensing decision until they have all the relevant medical information. This may take quite a long time. Whether or not you can continue driving during the course of this investigation, should depend on advice from the doctor in charge in accordance with the medical standards of fitness guide referred to above. But if you choose to

ignore medical advice to stop driving, you could lose your insurance cover.

If the DVLA can make a decision based on the information you originally provided, they aim to make a decision on 88 per cent of cases within 15 working days. If they need more information about your condition, either from you, your doctor, or from other sources, or if you are applying for a lorry or bus licence, they aim to make a decision on 85 per cent of cases within 90 working days.

Driving - getting your licence back

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When do I get my licence back?

You don't have to re-take your driving test. You will just get your licence back once you are declared fit. The return of your license is not automatic. If you had surrendered your licence to the DVLA, you can apply to get it back two months before the end of the period for which you were disqualified from driving, eg. If you have been disqualified for two years, you could apply 22 months from when the period started.

In exceptional cases, your doctor may make a case for a patient's licence to be returned earlier if the person had been well enough i.e. on medical grounds, but this is rare. Note, a need for a driving licence such as needing to drive for work, does not make you medically fit to drive.

How do I reapply for my licence?

You can get a D1 application form at your post office or order the form online. How long it then takes before you get the licence back, depends on how long it takes the DVLA medical enquiry to declare you medically fit.

The DVLA will usually contact your specialist and will take each decision on an individual basis depending on what your doctor says about your level of fitness and risk of further symptoms and keeping in mind the medical standards of fitness to drive.

Again, the more information you can provide directly to the DVLA the better.

When can I start driving again?

If you had sent your licence back voluntarily:

You can start driving again when you meet the epilepsy driving regulations. This is provided: your doctor agrees that you meet the epilepsy's driving regulations, and you have checked and confirm that the driving agency has received your application. This means you do not need your new licence before you can start driving.

If you didn't send back your driving licence voluntarily and it was revoked:

You can only start driving again once you have been issued with a new driving licence.

What are my options if I feel I am not being treated fairly?

You can write to the DVLA asking them to reconsider your case. You will need to explain why you believe the decision is wrong and send with your letter a letter of support from your family doctor or epilepsy specialist.

If the matter is not resolved, you could ask next for your case to be reviewed by the DVLA medical panel.

If your request is unsuccessful and you believe the DVLA is acting unlawfully, you can make a formal appeal and should contact a solicitor who specialises in cases involving the DVLA.

The DVLA should send you details of the appeals process at the time of the licence decision.

In England you have six months from the date of DVLA's decision to appeal. In Scotland the period is 21 days and in Northern Ireland it is three months from the date of issue of the decision letter.

What do I do if my consultant is delaying the process?

If you are think your consultant is taking too long to give the information the DVLA asked for on your case, you should tell his or her secretary you are not happy.

If this does not work, you can call PALS (The Patient Advise and Liaison Service) in your area (just type in PALS and your local area into a search engine to find the telephone number) and explain the extreme delays you are experiencing in getting responses from your consultant to the DVLA. They should be able to chase up the consultant on your behalf.

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Brain Tumour UK is the leading, caring charity committed to fighting brain tumours. Our personalised support is available online, on the phone, by email and through our support groups. Our scientific research improves the quality of life for brain tumour patients and identifies better treatments. We raise awareness to change things for the better, for everyone affected by a brain tumour.

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