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## Epilepsy and driving: what you need to know

If you have epilepsy and want to learn to drive or already have a licence, there are rules and responsibilities you'll need to understand. The rules don't necessarily mean you can't drive, but are there to make it safe for yourself and others if you do.

### Can you still drive if you have epilepsy?

There isn't a single rule for epilepsy and driving. It depends on the type of [epilepsy](#) and seizures you have. The key factors are whether you have seizures while awake and if they affect your consciousness. If you do, you must wait 12 months without seizures or blackouts before getting your licence back.

Examples of seizures which will prevent you from driving include:

- **Tonic-clonic seizures** - when you lose consciousness, have stiff muscles, and your limbs jerk. This type of seizure is most recognisable and commonly associated with epilepsy.
- **Absence seizures** - when you stop what you're doing and appear to be day-dreaming. In this state, you won't be aware of your surroundings, and another person can't bring you out of it.
- **Focal seizures** - when you experience an aura, often warning that a tonic-clonic seizure is coming. Focal seizures can affect your awareness and control over muscles and limbs, which can cause jerking and limpness.

## Do you have to declare epilepsy to the DVLA?

If you have a seizure or blackout, you must inform the DVLA if you drive or are learning to drive. Failing to do so risks your safety and that of other drivers and pedestrians<sup>1</sup>, and you could receive a £1000 fine or face prosecution<sup>2</sup>.

You can [declare your condition](#) to the DVLA online. Whether you lose your licence and the length of the suspension depends on several factors.

## How long do you have to be seizure-free to drive in the UK?

For car and motorbike drivers, if the seizure occurs while you're awake and it affects your consciousness then you will need to be 12 months blackout and seizure-free before you can re-apply for your licence.

If it's your first seizure, a one-off occurrence, or the seizure is caused by a change in medication, your suspension may be six months.

For a bus, coach, or lorry licence, suspensions are 10 years for seizures that affect consciousness and five years for one-off or provoked seizures – such as a change of medication.

To determine if, and how long, you will lose your driving licence, the DVLA considers the following:

- [Type of epilepsy](#) and seizure.
- Type of vehicle and licence.
- Whether it affects your consciousness.
- Whether it's your first seizure.
- If you suffer from asleep seizures.

Visit the [DVLA's website](#) to declare your condition or learn more about epilepsy and driving.

# What help is available if I can't drive due to epilepsy?

[Living with epilepsy](#) affects people in different ways and for many not being able to drive will have a significant impact. Systems are in place to support people with epilepsy who need to travel - being able to travel independently affects your social, family, and work life.

## Help with bus and train travel

If you no longer drive because of epilepsy or any other medical condition, you're entitled to a [disabled bus pass](#) in England, Scotland, and Wales. If you live in Northern Ireland, you can travel at a reduced cost.

There's also a [disabled person's rail card](#) available which gives you one third off all rail travel in England, Scotland, and Wales.

## Help with travel to work costs

If you can't use public transport, access to work schemes are available to ensure you aren't out of pocket for taxi fares and similar expenses<sup>3</sup>.

## Support from your employer

For support with epilepsy and driving, it's essential to inform your employer and explain the situation. Adjusting to life without driving can be difficult and affect aspects of your job. For example, if you have to leave for work earlier because of public transport or some of your duties require a driving licence. According to equality laws<sup>4</sup>, people with epilepsy are classed as disabled, so your employer must offer the support you need to get to work and do your job.

# How does having epilepsy affect my car insurance?

You need to inform your insurer if you need to stop driving because of epilepsy, as every insurance policy requires a valid driving licence. Failing to declare a medical condition that makes you more of a risk may invalidate your policy if you make a claim. Having epilepsy may increase the cost of your premium as you are considered more of a risk.

If you plan to keep your vehicle while suspended and park it on roads or public areas you still need tax and insurance or you'll receive fines or penalty points.

## Further reading

1. [Krumholz: Driving issues in epilepsy: past, present, and future](#)
2. [GOV.UK: Epilepsy and driving](#)
3. [GOV.UK: Access to work support](#)
4. [EOC: The equality act](#)

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Originally Published: 20/11/2023		Document ID: doc_32312

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