

Diabetes Information Sheet

Diabetes and Driving

Diabetes and Driving

Having diabetes, however it is treated, does not prevent you driving a car or a motorbike. As long as your diabetes is well controlled, and your doctor says that you are safe to drive, there is no reason why you cannot be issued with, or retain a driving licence. However, you do need to let your insurance company know, and you may need also to inform the Driving and Vehicle Licence Agency (DVLA). This leaflet is designed to guide you on your legal requirements and provide you with all the knowledge that you need to drive safely.

Who do I need to inform?

- No matter how your diabetes is treated, you must by law inform your insurance company that you have diabetes.

Insulin Treated:

- If your diabetes is treated with Insulin you must inform the DVLA.

Group 1 Ordinary Driving Licence – Car, Motorcycle

- An explanation letter will be sent to you about your licence and driving by DVLA.
- You must recognise warning symptoms of hypoglycaemia and meet visual standards. The licence will be issued for 1, 2 or 3 years.

Group 2 Vocational Driving Licence – LGV (Large Goods Vehicle) / PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle)

- New applicants on insulin or existing drivers are barred in law from driving LGV or PCV vehicles from 01/04/1991.
- Drivers licensed before 01/04/1991 on insulin will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Temporary Insulin Treated:

e.g Gestational / post-myocardial infarction, participants in oral/inhaled insulin trials.

Group 1 Ordinary Driving Licence

- May retain licence but should stop driving if experiencing disabling hypoglycaemia.

Group 2 Vocational Driving Licence

- Legal bar to holding a licence while insulin treated. May reapply when insulin treatment is discontinued (2).

Diet and Tablet Treated:

Group 1 Ordinary Driving Licence

- If your diabetes is treated with diet and tablets, you do not need to inform DVLA unless you develop associated diabetes problems (problems with hypoglycaemia, diabetic eye problems affecting visual acuity and fields, need for laser treatment, develop problems with circulation and sensation in the legs, an existing medical condition deteriorates or new condition develops which may affect safe driving or start insulin).
- Remember, if you start or change from tablets to insulin, you must inform the DVLA.
- If your diabetes is treated with tablets or insulin and you are applying for a driving licence for the first time, you must also inform the DVLA.

Group 2 Vocational Driving Licence

- Drivers will be licensed unless they develop relevant disabilities as above. If these occur the DVLA may either refuse, or issue a short period licence. If insulin commences licence will be refused or revocation (2). Drivers should inform the DVLA of their medication, and if exenatide, liraglutide or gliptins are added to sulphonylurea medication.

If you fail to inform the DVLA or your insurance company then your driving insurance will be invalid.

Telling the DVLA

- If you are applying for a licence, answer YES to the question if you have diabetes.
- If you already hold a driving licence, write a letter to the DVLA telling them about your diabetes and how it is treated. If you are treated with insulin, you will be sent another form (Diabetic 1) asking for more information. This includes the name and address of your General Practitioner or hospital doctor. They will also ask for your consent to approach these people directly, if necessary, to obtain information on your fitness to drive. This does not mean, however, that you will be refused a licence.

- If your diabetes is treated with insulin, a driving licence will be issued for one, two or three years, and will allow you to drive a vehicle up to 3.5 tonnes. When this licence expires you will receive a reminder to renew the licence and you may also be sent another Diabetic 1 form to complete with more up-to-date information. Renewals are free of charge.
- If your diabetes is treated with tablets, you are not always sent the Diabetic 1 form. In general, you will be issued with a full driving licence, providing that you do not have any other medical condition which might prevent this. There is a charge for renewing this licence after the age of 70. This is the same as for anyone else in the UK who does not have diabetes.

Driving Safely

You should not drive if you:

- Have difficulty recognising the early signs of hypoglycaemia.
- Have problems with your eyesight, which are not corrected with glasses.
- Have numbness or weakness in your limbs.
- Have been drinking alcohol.**

If you are unsure about any of these, you can talk to your diabetes team for more advice.

Try to avoid low blood sugars while driving by:

- Always carrying carbohydrate (sugary) food in your car.
- Not driving for more than 2 hours without eating a snack.
- Not missing, or delaying, a meal or snack.
- Checking your blood sugar levels before and during your car journey. If it is below 5.6mmol/L you should have a long acting carbohydrate snack before driving.
- Carrying identification both on yourself and in your car – you should identify that you have diabetes and how it is treated.

If you feel a hypo when driving

- **STOP** driving as soon as it is safe to do so.
- **Remove the ignition key and move into the passenger seat.** This is to avoid any suggestion that you may be “under the influence of drugs” whilst in charge of a car.
- **Immediately** take glucose tablets, a sugary drink or sweets.
- **Follow this by taking** a longer acting carbohydrate e.g. biscuits or crisps.
- Following treatment of hypoglycaemia wait **45 minutes** before resuming driving.

If you have an accident whilst you are hypoglycaemic, you should get legal advice and the support of your diabetes care team. You should also contact Diabetes UK for further help and advice.

Driving for your work

- Local councils issue licences for taxis and minicabs. Their policies may vary throughout the UK and it is best to check with individual councils for further information.
- If your diabetes is treated with diet or diet and tablets, you may hold a licence to drive either a large good vehicle (LGV) or a passenger-carrying vehicle (PCV). If your diabetes is treated with insulin, you will be unable to hold either and LGV or a PCV licence.
- If your diabetes is treated with insulin, you will automatically lose the entitlement to drive vehicles within the C1/C1+E class. This includes vehicles between 3.5 and 7.5 tonnes with a trailer, up to a combined weight of 8.25 tonnes. However, you may apply to be assessed individually for fitness to drive these vehicles. If you are new to insulin you will not be able to make this application until your diabetes has been stabilised for one month.
- Applying for a c1/c1+e license (April 2001) – (Small lorries/with or without a trailer. You will not be entitled to drive D1 (Minibuses).**
- In order to apply for this licence, you must ensure that you meet the following qualifying conditions:
 - No episodes of hypoglycaemia which have required assistance whilst driving within the last 12 months. You must undertake to regularly monitor your blood sugar levels at least twice a day and at times relevant to your driving. If your application is successful, then you will need to continue to monitor in this way, particularly at times relevant to driving C1/C1+E vehicles.
 - You will not be able to apply for a C1 or C1E licence until your condition has been stable for a period of a month.
 - Every 12 months, you will need to arrange to be examined by a hospital consultant who specialises in diabetes. At the time of this examination, the consultant will need to review your blood glucose records for the previous 3-month period.
 - You must have no other medical condition which would bar you from driving these vehicles.
 - You will be required to sign an undertaking to comply with the directions of your doctor(s) treating you / your diabetes and you will need to report to DVLA immediately if you have any significant change in your condition.

If you are unsure whether or not you are able to apply for this licence, contact the DVLA directly (Tel: 0870 600 0301)

Driving insurance

- For your car insurance to be valid, you must inform your insurance company as soon as you develop diabetes. This is required whether your diabetes is controlled by diet, tables or insulin.
- Some companies may refuse cover, impose special terms or charge an increased premium if their statistics show that drivers with diabetes are at higher risk. If this happens, it is worth challenging your insurer, especially if your diabetes is stable and well controlled. It is always worth shopping around for quotes from a number of insurers, as there can be a big difference in premiums.
- Diabetes UK services have a motor insurance quote line on freephone 0800 7317432. Although these insurers are very sympathetic to people with diabetes, they cannot be guaranteed to be the cheapest in every case.

For further information:

Diabetes UK: Tel: 0845 120 2960 www.diabetes.org.uk

DVLA: Tel: 0870 240 0009

For Medical Enquiries: Tel: 0870 600 0301

www.dvla.gov.uk

Local contact:

Diabetes Nurse Specialist at Milton Keynes Hospital. 01908 243089

- (1) Adapted with permission from Tayside Diabetes Clinical Network leaflet'**
- (2) Taken from 'At a glance Guide to the current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive' issued by Drivers Medical Group DVLA, Swansea September 2009**