

Driving after stroke

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100
or email: helpline@stroke.org.uk

You are not allowed to drive for a month after a stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA). Some people have to stop driving for longer, or will not be able to drive again. This guide helps you understand what to do if you are a driver, including when to tell the DVLA (DVA in Northern Ireland).

This is a general guide to driving after a stroke. You should always get individual advice from your doctor about your stroke and any other health conditions that affect your driving.

The team of stroke professionals involved in your care may help with assessing the skills you need for driving. They can also advise whether it is safe for you to return to driving.

Read this guide to find out more, and check online stroke.org.uk/driving.

Key points

- You must not drive for a calendar month after a stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA).
- It is your responsibility to tell the DVLA (DVA in Northern Ireland) about any medical condition that affects your driving.
- If you have a licence to drive a large goods vehicle (LGV) or passenger carrying vehicle (PCV), you must tell the DVLA about your stroke or TIA straight away.
- Car and motorbike drivers don't usually need to tell the DVLA about a stroke in the first month, but there are some exceptions.
- If you have a car or motorbike licence, and you can drive safely, you may be able to start driving again after a month. But it depends what type of stroke you had, and other health conditions like epilepsy.

Do I need to tell the DVLA/DVA about my stroke?

No, if:

If you drive a car or motorbike and you had a single transient ischemic attack (TIA) or stroke with no brain surgery or seizures, you can usually start driving again after one calendar month. You only need to tell the DVLA/DVA if your stroke affects your ability to drive.

The exception is if you had a type of stroke due to a bleed in the brain. See below for more information. If you are not sure, always get individual advice about your stroke or effects of stroke from your stroke team or GP.

Yes, if:

You must notify the DVLA/DVA if any of the following apply:

- You are a Group 2 driver (lorry and bus).
- Your ability to drive has been affected.
- You had several TIAs.
- You had more than one stroke in three months.
- You had a subarachnoid haemorrhage (brain bleed).
- You had any seizures.
- You had brain surgery.
- Your doctor tells you not to drive.
- If your disability or health gets worse.

Car and motorbike drivers

One calendar month after a stroke or TIA, if your stroke has affected your driving, you must tell the DVLA/DVA. See the next page for more information about how stroke can affect driving ability.

If you had a type of haemorrhagic stroke (bleed in the brain) called a subarachnoid haemorrhage, you must tell the DVLA/DVA.

If you are not sure what type of stroke you had, speak to your stroke team or GP.

If you need to drive a vehicle with adapted controls, you must tell the DVLA/DVA, as you need changes to your driving licence.

Large vehicle drivers

If you drive a large vehicle such as a lorry or bus, you must tell the DVLA/DVA about your stroke or TIA as soon as possible. You can't drive for a minimum of one year after the stroke or TIA.

Whether you can drive again will depend on the type of stroke you had, and how the stroke has affected you. If you are unsure, ask your GP or a member of your stroke team, and speak to the DVLA/DVA.

How can a stroke affect my driving?

After a stroke your ability to drive safely can be affected in various ways. You may have physical or visual problems, or you may have difficulty concentrating for long periods of time or making quick decisions.

Physical effects

Weakness in your arm, leg or both is common after a stroke. You may also experience other physical effects which include pain, changes in sensation, weakness and problems with balance.

Vision problems

A stroke can cause a variety of problems with your sight. These include double or blurred vision, loss of central vision in one or both of your eyes, and visual field loss.

Cognitive effects

Driving requires many different cognitive skills. You need to be able to concentrate, navigate, multitask and make quick decisions. After a stroke you may have difficulty concentrating, understanding, solving problems, or making decisions. Your perception of space and distance may have changed, or you may have problems with your memory.

Fatigue

After your stroke you may find that you lack energy and feel extremely tired. This may affect your ability to concentrate and maintain alertness while you drive.

Seizures and epilepsy

If you have any seizures after your stroke, you must stop driving and need to tell the DVLA/DVA. Depending on the type of seizures you might be able to start driving after six months or a year, but the DVLA/DVA could decide on a longer period.

What if my doctor says I should not drive?

If your doctor tells you to stop driving for three months or more, you should contact the DVLA/DVA to tell them about your medical condition. You might need to send back your driving licence, but wait until you speak to the DVLA. They will tell you what to do next.

How do I tell the DVLA/DVA?

Step 1

- England, Scotland and Wales: car licence holders can report a medical condition online at gov.uk/report-driving-medical-condition. Car and lorry drivers can download a form at gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving.
- Northern Ireland: you can contact the Drivers Medical Section of the DVA by post, phone or email (see the end of this guide for details).

Step 2

Where possible, the DVLA/DVA will make a decision using the information you provide. If the DVLA/DVA require more information they may:

- Contact your GP or consultant for further information.
- Arrange for you to be examined by a medical officer or specialist.
- Ask you to take a driving assessment.

Step 3

Once the DVLA/DVA has received all the relevant information they will make a decision about whether you can drive again.

The DVLA/DVA may make one of the following decisions:

- You may be able to keep your licence.
- You may be issued a licence for a fixed period of one, two, three or five years, (one, two or three by the dva) after which time your medical fitness will be reviewed again.
- You may be issued with a licence to drive a vehicle with adapted controls.
- Your licence may be taken away. If this happens, you will be given a reason for this decision. You will be told whether you can reapply for your licence, and you will receive a notice explaining how you can appeal the decision.

The DVLA aims to make a decision within six weeks. You will be notified if the decision is going to take longer. If the DVA are making the decision, they will aim to decide within three to four weeks. If further information is required about your medical conditions or you have a LGV or PCV licence, the decision may take longer.

What happens if I don't tell the DVLA/DVA?

If you don't tell the DVLA/DVA about a medical condition that affects your driving, you could end up with a criminal conviction. You could be fined up to £1000, and you could be prosecuted if you have a collision.

Insurance

Before you start driving again you must tell your insurance company about your stroke or TIA. If you don't do this, it might invalidate your insurance. Insurance companies have their own processes, so talk to yours to find out more. Check your policy carefully. They might want confirmation that you are safe to drive.

Having a medical condition can make insurance more expensive. Try shopping around, or look for a specialist insurance provider when you need to renew. Medical conditions may increase the amount you pay for your insurance so you may wish to shop around for a competitive quote.

Starting to drive again

If you are able to return to driving, the choice of when and how to do it is a personal one. Some people prefer to take some time and rebuild confidence. For others it is an urgent goal. If you have an occupational therapist, talk to them about it. They can tailor your therapy to help prepare you to return to driving. An automatic car can be easier to drive than a manual.

Before you start driving again, you may find it helpful to have a few refresher lessons with a qualified driving instructor. You can find driving instructors in your area by looking in your local phonebook or on the internet. Check that they are registered with the Driving Standards Agency (DSA).

Mobility centres can also provide advice about returning to driving (see the 'Other sources of help and information' section).

Driving and work

If you drive as part of your work, a stroke can affect your income and way of life.

If you drive for a living

If you drive for a living you might have to take a break from your usual work until the DVLA/DVA allows you to return to driving. Some people will not be able to go back to work, and may need to re-train or look for new types of work or a new career. People tell us that this can be a huge challenge. Seeking work at the same time as dealing with fatigue or other effects of stroke might feel hard to cope with.

You can get more information about changing jobs after stroke in our guide 'A complete guide to work and stroke'. Seek advice from your local Job Centre Plus, which has advisors for people with disabilities. Ask your GP if there are occupational health services in your area that can support you.

Licensed taxi drivers must tell their local authority licensing department about their stroke and any medical conditions. Drivers of larger vehicles (lorries or buses) have a minimum of a year away from driving after a stroke or TIA. If you drive a police or health service vehicle, your employer may follow the same rules as for larger vehicle licences.

Sick pay and benefits

If you are off work while recovering from a stroke or TIA, you might get sick pay from your employer. If you are self-employed you may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit. To find out what benefits you can claim visit gov.uk/welfare.

Returning to work as a driver

If you are able to go back to driving, you may need to change your working hours or shift pattern to avoid fatigue. You might need to use different equipment for some tasks. If you are employed, speak to your employer about how the stroke could affect your work and discuss a 'return-to-work plan'. This could include regular chats with your manager to check if there are any problems, and agree any changes needed to help you return to work.

It may be possible to do a different type of work with the same employer. See 'A complete guide to work and stroke' for practical ideas about returning to work.

Driving to get to work

If you rely on the car to get to work, and you find it difficult to use public transport due to mobility problems, you may be able to get funding for taxis to work via the Access to Work scheme. Your employer might be able to support you working from home some or all of the time. For more information about returning to work after a stroke read our guide 'A complete guide to work and stroke'.

If you can get to work by public transport you might be able to get reduced price travel such as a Disabled Person's Railcard.

If your licence has been revoked for medical reasons, you are entitled to a free bus pass in most areas. In Northern Ireland you can get a SmartPass giving you half price travel. In London you can get a Freedom Pass. Apply through your local council.

Emotional impact of not driving

If you are unable to drive, you may feel that you have lost some of your independence. You may have to rely on others to get out and about, particularly if you live in a rural area and public transport is hard to access. You might feel isolated, frustrated, or low. Talk to your family and your healthcare professionals about how you are feeling. They can help you to look at other options that will help you do the things that are important to you, such as seeing friends and taking part in hobbies or community activities.

There could be ways of getting around in your area, such as using bus, train, taxis or community transport schemes.

Many people recover from some of the effects of their stroke over time. If you improve, you might be able to have a repeat driving assessment at a later time. When your licence has been returned, refresher driving lessons can help you regain confidence.

If you are feeling very low or anxious, speak to your GP, or contact our Helpline for ideas about how to get emotional support.

Alternatives to driving

Community transport

In some areas, local councils provide community transport schemes for people who have disabilities and are unable to use public transport. The services vary, but they may be able to take you door-to-door to places in your local area or on shopping trips. Contact your local council to find out more about schemes in your area. There are also dial-a-ride services in many parts of the UK where you can book wheelchair-accessible transport.

Access to Work

If you can't use public transport because of your disability, the Access to Work Scheme may be able to help you with the cost of getting to and from work.

Visit [gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work) or speak to a Disability Employment Adviser at your local Jobcentre Plus (Jobs and Benefits Office in Northern Ireland).

Trains

You may be able to buy a Disabled Person's Railcard. This entitles you to a third off the cost of most rail fares in England, Scotland and Wales. It also gives you a third off pay-as-you-go Oyster fares on Transport for London trains. If you live in Northern Ireland, you could be entitled to a half fare SmartPass which can be used for bus and rail travel – contact Translink.

Bus

If you can't get a driving licence for medical reasons, you can get a free bus pass, a Freedom Pass in London, or SmartPass in Northern Ireland.

You may be entitled to a free bus pass if you have a disability. In England and Scotland contact your local council, or local authorities in Wales.

For Northern Ireland, you may be entitled to the SmartPass, which gives you half price travel, if you receive the mobility component of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Shopmobility

Many towns and shopping centres in England and Wales also offer Shopmobility schemes that hire out manual wheelchairs and powered scooters to anyone who needs help with getting out and about.

Motability scheme

If you are receiving certain benefits you might be able to exchange some or all of your benefit to lease a new car, powered wheelchair or scooter through the Motability Scheme.

To be eligible you need to be on a disability benefit such as the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments. Others include the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement and Armed Forces Independence Payment.

Even if you can't drive, you can still get a Motability vehicle and choose other people to drive for you. A Motability car could be used to drive you around, and also for journeys to support you even if you're not in the car, such as doing your shopping.

The Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge scheme lets you park in convenient spaces in car parks and on-street parking areas. You can use your badge in any car, as a driver or passenger. Your local authority will be able to tell you if you are eligible for a badge, how to apply and more details about the scheme.

Specially adapted cars

There are various vehicle adaptations and motoring accessories that can make driving possible and more comfortable with a physical disability.

Specialist mobility centres can carry out assessments and provide advice about making adaptations to your vehicle which can enable you to return to driving. They can also provide assessments for passengers with disabilities, and information on how to safely lift wheelchairs in and out of a car. There are centres across the UK (see 'Other sources of help and information').

Worried about someone's driving?

If you are worried about the safety of someone's driving, it can be a tricky subject to talk about. But it's vital to make them aware of your concerns, not just for their safety, but for the safety of others on the road.

If a person has been driving for many years it can be hard to suddenly stop, and it can change the way they see themselves. So they may need support and guidance from family, friends and professionals.

Sometimes stroke survivors find it difficult to recognise the effects of stroke. Stroke can also affect your judgement and, in rare cases, someone can be unaware they have a disability. This is a condition called anosognosia.

Family members and professionals may need to remind them that they can no longer drive because of the potential risk to themselves and others. You could read this guide together and talk about the other ways of getting around, and plan some of the journeys they might want to make using alternative types of transport.

If you feel that the person is not safe to drive and they refuse to stop driving, you can write to the DLVA in confidence online at live.email-dvla.service.gov.uk.

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Helpline

Our Helpline offers information and support for anyone affected by a stroke. This includes friends and carers.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**, from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100**
Email helpline@stroke.org.uk.

Read our information

Get more information about stroke online at stroke.org.uk, or call the Helpline to ask for printed copies of our guides.

My Stroke Guide

The Stroke Association's online tool My Stroke Guide gives you free access to trusted advice, information and support 24/7. My Stroke Guide connects you to our online community, to find out how others manage their recovery.

Log on to mystrokeguide.com today.

Other sources of help and information

Vehicle and driving organisations

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) (England, Scotland and Wales)

Website: gov.uk/dvla

Drivers' medical enquiries: **0300 790 6806**

NIDirect Motoring (Northern Ireland)

Website: nidirect.gov.uk/motoring/

Tel: **0300 200 7861**

Email: dva@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Blue Badge Scheme

England and Wales:

gov.uk/apply-blue-badge

Scotland:

mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge

Northern Ireland: [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/](http://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/apply-or-renew-blue-badge)

[apply-or-renew-blue-badge](http://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/apply-or-renew-blue-badge)

Blue badge applications are processed by your local council. You can apply online using the links above. Or you can contact your local council to apply by telephone or post.

Disabled Motoring UK

Website: disabledmotoring.org

Tel: **01508 489 449**

Email: info@disabledmotoring.org

A charity run by disabled people for disabled motorists, passengers and carers.

Driving Mobility

Website: drivingmobility.org.uk

Tel: **0800 559 3636**

Email: info@drivingmobility.org.uk

A network of centres that offer information and assessment to drivers with disabilities. Contact them to find out where your nearest mobility centre is located and for more information about the services that the centres provide.

Motability

Website: motability.co.uk

Tel: **0300 456 4566**

The Motability scheme enables people with disabilities to hire cars, powered wheelchairs or scooters.

National Association for Bikers with a Disability

Website: nabd.org.uk

Tel: **0844 415 4849**

Email: office@thenabd.org.uk

A charity providing information, support and grants to help disabled people enjoy independent motorcycling.

Regional Driving Assessment Centre

Website: rdac.co.uk

Tel: **0300 300 2240**

Email: info@rdac.co.uk

An independent charity dedicated to helping people who are or would like to be drivers or passengers in their own vehicle in order to be independent.

RiDC (the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs)

Website: ridc.org.uk

Tel: **020 7427 2460**

Email: mail@ridc.org.uk

This charity provides free, practical and unbiased reports for disabled consumers, including guides to mobility, motoring and public transport.

Public transport services and alternative transport schemes

Disabled person's railcard (England, Wales, Scotland)

Website: disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Tel: **0345 605 0525**

This offers a third off rail fares for eligible disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales.

National Federation of Shopmobility UK

Website: nfsuk.org

Tel: **01933 229 644**

Email: shopmobility@bhta.com

The federation can tell you if there is a Shopmobility scheme near you.

Translink

Website: translink.co.uk

Tel: **02890 666 630**

Runs a travel scheme called SmartPass that offers concessions for older people and those claiming Disability Living Allowance in Northern Ireland.

Transport for London (TfL)

Website: tfl.gov.uk

Tel: **0343 222 1234**

Email: tflaccessibility@tfl.gov.uk

TfL provides information on assisted travel in London, large print and audio versions of their tube maps, maps with details of the step-free stations and a Getting around London guide.

Transport Scotland

Website: transport.gov.scot

Tel: **0141 272 7100**

Email: info@transport.gov.scot

Runs the National Entitlement Card scheme, offering free bus travel for older and disabled people in Scotland.

Insurance

British Insurance Brokers' Association

Website: biba.org.uk

Consumer Helpline: **0370 950 1790**

An organisation that can help you find insurance brokers in your local area.

About our information

We want to provide the best information for people affected by stroke. That's why we ask stroke survivors and their families, as well as medical experts, to help us put our publications together.

How did we do?

To tell us what you think of this guide, or to request a list of the sources we used to create it, email us at feedback@stroke.org.uk.

Accessible formats

Visit our website if you need this information in audio, large print or braille.

Always get individual advice

This guide contains general information about stroke. But if you have a problem, you should get individual advice from a professional such as a GP or pharmacist. Our Helpline can also help you find support. We work very hard to give you the latest facts, but some things change. We don't control the information provided by other organisations or websites.

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Every five minutes, stroke destroys lives. We need your support to help rebuild them. Donate or find out more at stroke.org.uk.

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