



Patient information – glaucoma service

Vision and driving FAQ's- Group 1 licence holders (private cars and motorbikes)

Summary:

Your doctor has recommended that you inform your driving licensing authority regarding your ability to drive because of your eye condition. The sharpness of your vision (visual acuity) or your field of vision may be affected or you may have double vision, blepharospasm¹ or nystagmus².

Driving licences are subject to controls and safeguards, which aim to keep the roads safe. Your duty to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) does not mean you will automatically lose your licence but you may be asked to have some tests. Failure to report a notifiable condition could lead to a fine and possibly a criminal conviction.

This leaflet aims to guide you through the process and answer some frequently asked questions.

For England and Wales the authority is the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), which is referred to throughout this leaflet. Other UK authorities are listed at the end of the leaflet.

Is my driving licence at risk?

People with certain medical conditions are required by law to notify the DVLA of these conditions. However, having problems with your eyes does not automatically mean that you have to stop driving.

Whose responsibility is it to inform the DVLA?

If your hospital eye specialist says that you have a sight condition that means you may not meet driving requirements, you have a legal duty to inform the DVLA (see full list of agencies at the end of the leaflet). This may be the case even if you feel your sight is good. Failure to report a medical condition that could lead to the loss of a driving licence may result in a £1,000 fine and a criminal conviction. You can inform

¹ Involuntary tight closure of the eyelids

² Continuous uncontrolled to and fro movement of the eyes

the DVLA either by completing an online form at www.driving-medical-condition.service.gov.uk/eligibility/entitlement-gb, by telephone or in writing. To help with this process, we have included a draft letter, which you can complete and post to the address provided.

What will happen when I contact the DVLA?

When you contact the DVLA you will be sent a questionnaire (V1) about your vision (you can also find this online). You will also be asked for permission to allow your GP to pass on information about your sight. You may also be asked to see a DVLA-approved ophthalmic optician for special sight tests. There are several types of tests such as measurement of the sharpness of your vision (visual acuity), analysis of your peripheral vision and the number-plate test.

Based on the results, the driving authority will decide if:

- You need to get a new driving licence.
- You can have a shorter licence - for 1, 2 or 3 years - with a review at the end of that period (if you wish to reapply).
- You need to adapt your car by fitting special controls. You can get an independent assessment of your adaptation needs through the Forum of Mobility Centres.
- You must stop driving and give up your licence.

You can generally expect a decision within eight weeks. If you do not meet the required standard you cannot drive on a public road. Doing so would mean you are guilty of a serious offence and putting other road users at risk. You should also check the driving requirements of your insurer.

In conditions which could lead to deterioration of your eye health (for example, macular degeneration), your vision will be checked every 12–36 months. If you feel your sight has worsened and you are not sure whether or not it is affecting your ability to drive, you should ask for advice from your GP, optician or eye specialist. If you disagree with the DVLA decision you are entitled to appeal.

If you feel that since you have contacted the DVLA your sight has improved (for example, you have a fluctuating condition or your condition has improved following surgery), you must inform the DVLA so they can review your driving status.

Why have I been asked to inform the DVLA?

There are several reasons why you might have been asked to inform the DVLA:

1. If the sharpness of your vision (visual acuity) is below the legal limit. This should be measured while wearing your distance glasses or contact lenses. Magnifying or telescopic (bioptic) devices are not acceptable for driving in



the UK. There are many conditions that can cause deterioration of your vision, such as cataracts, scarring on the cornea or age-related macular degeneration. Your hospital eye specialist will let you know if you do not meet visual acuity standards and if anything can be done to improve your vision.

2. If your field of vision (visual field) is below the legal limit

If this is a possibility, your hospital eye specialist will ask you to inform the DVLA and they will refer to your local approved DVLA ophthalmic optician, who will test your field of vision with both eyes open. The optician will also be able to help you fill out the relevant paperwork for the DVLA. Conditions that may affect your visual fields include glaucoma in both eyes, retinopathy in both eyes, retinitis pigmentosa, damage to the optic nerve and sight loss from a stroke. Your hospital eye specialist will let you know if you may not meet visual field standards.³

If you are unable to see light with one of your eyes you must have a sufficient standard of vision in the other eye to meet the overall visual acuity and visual field standards (see above). You can continue driving if your doctor has advised that you have adapted to seeing with one eye only. A recent change in guidelines means that you need not inform the DVLA of this.

3. If you have double vision (diplopia)

If you experience double vision you need to stop driving immediately and notify the DVLA. You can resume driving when it is confirmed to the DVLA that your double vision is controlled with the use of prisms on your glasses or with a patch. If you choose to wear a patch, the visual acuity and visual field standards must still be met (see section 2). In certain circumstances,

there is an exception for people who have longstanding double vision and have become so used to it their function is no longer affected. This needs medical confirmation by your ophthalmologist.

¹ The DVLA defines the minimum field of vision for safe driving as, “A field of at least 120 degrees on the horizontal, measured using a target equivalent to the white Goldmann III4e settings; the extension should be at least 50 degrees left and right. In addition, there should be no significant defect in the binocular field which encroaches within 20 degrees of fixation above or below the horizontal meridian”.

In Plain English, this means that with both eyes open you have to have at least 120 degrees of vision horizontally and no central field loss within 20 degrees.

4. If you can only see in certain lighting conditions

If you have a long-term condition that affects your ability to see in poor lighting (for example, night blindness or retinitis pigmentosa), or your ability to see in bright direct light (for example, glare or photosensitivity), you must

inform the DVLA. Your case will be considered on an individual basis.

5. If you have a diagnosis of involuntary tight closure of your eyelids (blepharospasm)

You may be able to continue driving if the blepharospasm is mild, but this is not usually permitted if the condition is more severe and is affecting your vision, even if treated.

6. If you have continuous uncontrolled to and fro movement of the eyes (nystagmus)

The sharpness of your vision may be affected if you have nystagmus.

Can I drive abroad?

Most European countries conform to the same sight driving regulations. However, it is recommended that you check if you are eligible to drive before travelling abroad, as other countries may have different requirements.

What happens if I hold a Group 2 driving licence?

All the above information applies to driving a private car or motorbike. There are much stricter vision requirements for driving vocational vehicles. You need to contact the DVLA for more information.

If you need support, contact the integrated patient support services at Moorfields.

Tel: 020 7566 2385

Licensing authorities

England, Scotland and Wales

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Drivers Medical Enquiries

Tel: 0300 790 6806 (Mon-Fri: 8am-5:30pm, Sat: 8am-1pm)

Email: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

Address: Drivers Medical Enquiries, DVLA, Swansea SA99 1TU

Northern Ireland

Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA)

Tel: 08454 024 000

Email: dva@doeni.gov.uk

Republic of Ireland

Road Safety Authority (RSA)

Tel: 01890 406 040

Email: info@rsa.ie

Isle of Man

IOM Licensing Department

Tel: 0162 698 525/686 836

Email: licensing@iompost.com

Channel Islands

Vehicle Registration & Licensing Department (VRLD)

Tel: 01481 243 400

Email: info@gov.gg

Government advice on driving eyesight rules

www.gov.uk/driving-eyesight-rules

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Revision number: 2
Approval date: April 2018
Review date: April 2020





**Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust**
City Road, London EC1V 2PD
Phone: 020 7253 3411
www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye
conditions and treatments from
experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Moorfields' PALS team provides
confidential advice and support to help
you with any concerns you may have
about the care we provide, guiding you
through the different services available
at Moorfields. The PALS team can also
advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients
have the right to begin consultant-led
treatment within 18 weeks of being
referred by their GP. Moorfields is
committed to fulfilling this right, but if
you feel that we have failed to do so,
please contact our patient advice and
liaison service (PALS) who will be able
to advise you further (see above). For
more information about your rights
under the NHS constitution, visit
www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

