

Assess your own fitness to drive following an injury

What you should know about your injury and your ability to drive legally and safely.

This advice is only applicable to sprains, strains and other muscle or joint injuries and does not apply if you have had a collapse/seizure.

If you drive a motor vehicle, motorcycle or ride a bike or horse, you need to be aware of the possible consequences of your injury and your ability to drive.

You need to be aware that it is your responsibility to ensure that you are fit to drive. You are responsible for your actions and decisions when driving.

If you are involved in an accident or stopped by the police, you may be asked to prove that you are in full control of your vehicle. If an injury hinders you and you cannot drive a motor vehicle with control, a 'driving without due care and attention' charge may be brought.

Assessing your fitness to drive

When assessing your fitness to drive, consider any pain relief or other medication you are taking for the injury. Is medication affecting your ability to think clearly or react to the situation? If so, you should not drive your vehicle. If you are in any doubt seek the advice of your GP or pharmacist.

Being unable to sleep at night due to your injury can affect your co-ordination.

If you feel tired and sleepy, you are advised not to drive until you are rested.

Section 91 of the Highway Code states: 'Driving when you are tired greatly increases your risk of collision.'

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You are advised to assess your injury in your own vehicle and consider whether or not your vehicle has power steering, and whether it has manual or automatic transmission as this will affect your assessment.

We normally advise you not to drive in a plaster. A plaster cast or splint will reduce your range of movement.

To assess your ability to drive

To assess lower leg strength, endurance, range of motion and balance:

If it takes you more than 9 seconds to walk 3 metres, or 10 feet, turn around and walk back to the start, your legs may be too weak for you to drive safely.

To assess ability to control and manoeuvre your vehicle:

Neck rotation: Can you look over either shoulder to be able to reverse?

Finger curl: Can you make fists with both hands strong enough to allow you to hold a steering wheel safely?

Shoulder and elbow flexion: Pretend you are holding a steering wheel. Can you turn the imaginary wheel all the way to the right and then all the way to the left?

Ankle flexion: Pretend you are pressing a car accelerator or brake pedal quickly and hard. Now bring your toes back towards you. If your movement is hesitant, causes pain or is limited, your ability to drive safely will be affected. If you can perform these movements easily, check your strength with the below-mentioned process.

To assess your strength, ask someone to provide light resistance against these movements:

Lift each arm in turn in the air, as if you are putting your hand up at school. Then bring each arm slowly back to your side.

Move each hand up and down to test your wrists.

Move each foot up and down to test your ankles.

Clench your hands.

Each movement can be scored using this scale:

0 = No movement

1 = Muscle contracts but no movement

2 = Movement but not against gravity

3 = Movement against gravity

4 = Movement against light resistance

5 = Movement against strong resistance



These tests are individual. If you are unsure whether you can drive safely, you can request an 'on-road' assessment by a DVLA expert.

(Adapted from Carter T (2006) Fitness to Drive: A guide for Health Professional. Royal Society of Medicine Press, London.)

Informing the DVLA

You do not need to contact the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) about an injury unless it is likely to affect you for more than three months.

If you drive a heavy goods or public service vehicle, eg bus or train the rules may be stricter. Please inform your employer of your injury and seek advice from the DVLA.

Motor vehicle insurance

Please discuss your injury with your insurance company. Your injury may invalidate your insurance. It is illegal to drive without valid insurance.

Some of this guidance may also be relevant to people who ride bicycles, tricycles, or use mobility vehicles/scooters

Helpful websites:

Medical standards for drivers from the DVLA are at:

www.dft.gov.uk/dvla/medical.aspx

Highway Code advice on fitness to drive is at:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/DG_069855

Driving after discharge: advising injured patients is at:

www.emergencynurse.co.uk

DVLA INF 94 Customer service guide for drivers with a medical condition:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inf94-customer-service-guide-for-drivers-with-a-medical-condition>

Please contact your GP or NHS111 for any queries or concerns.

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net

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