

## Driving and diabetes

Having diabetes, however it is treated, does **not** prevent you driving a car or motorbike.

As long as your diabetes is well controlled, and your doctor says you are safe to drive, there is no reason why you cannot be issued with, or retain, a driving licence.

You must, however, be aware of your blood glucose levels. Driving with low blood glucose levels (below 4 mmol/L) is dangerous. Low blood glucose levels (called hypoglycaemia or 'hypos') can cause a loss of concentration, erratic driving and might even cause you to become unconscious. This only happens when your diabetes is treated with some types of tablets and/or insulin. Ask your GP or diabetes team if your medications can have this effect. For further information see *Hypoglycaemia*.

### 1. Inform the DVLA:

The Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), must **by law** be informed about your diabetes if:

- You are treated with insulin or tablets
- You are already on tablets or insulin and are applying for a driving licence for the first time.
- You **do not** need to tell the DVLA about your diabetes if you are treated by **diet alone**, but you must tell them if you **start taking tablets** or **change from tablets to insulin** treatment.

This does not mean you will be refused a licence to drive a car or motorbike, but the DVLA must be sure you are safe to drive. If you fail to inform the DVLA appropriately, your driving insurance will be invalid.

### Informing the DVLA

- **Applying for a licence:** in the pre-existing conditions section: tick 'YES' to the question for diabetes.
- **If you already hold a driving licence:** write a letter to the DVLA telling them about your diabetes and treatment. When asked to give details, say whether your diabetes is treated with insulin or tablets.

- **Over 70s:** Just as for anyone else in the UK who is aged over 70 years, there is a charge for renewing driving licences after the age of 70 years.
- **Diabetes-related problems:** You must inform the DVLA if any problems or complications with your diabetes develop that might affect your ability to drive.

### **Informing the DVLA if your diabetes is treated with insulin**

- You will be sent a form (*Diabetic 1*) asking for further information, including the name and address of your GP or hospital doctor. The DVLA will also ask for your consent to approach your doctor directly, if necessary.
- Your licence will be issued for 1, 2 or 3 years. Just before your licence expires, you will receive a reminder and maybe another *Diabetic 1* form to complete with up-to-date information. Renewals are free of charge.

### **Informing the DVLA if your diabetes is treated with tablets**

- You might be sent a *Diabetic 1* form. You will be issued with a full licence, as long as you do not have any other medical conditions that might prevent you driving safely.

## **2. Inform your driving insurance company**

You must **by law** inform your insurance company if you have diabetes, no matter how it is treated (diet alone, tablets and/or insulin). If you fail to do so, your insurance will be invalid. If your company wants to charge you a higher premium, get quotes from other companies for comparison. Diabetes UK has a Motor Insurance quote line on 0800 731 7432. Although they are sympathetic to people with diabetes, they cannot guarantee to be the cheapest in every case.

## **3. Tips for driving safely:**

You should **not** drive if you:

- Are under the influence of alcohol
- Have difficulty recognising the early signs of your hypos.
- Have problems with your eyesight that are not corrected with glasses.
- Have numbness or weakness in your limbs.

- If you are worried about any of the above points, talk to your diabetes care team.

## **Driving and low blood glucose levels ('hypos')**

- Avoiding driving with low blood glucose levels is vital for your safety and the safety of others.
- You must be aware of whether your diabetes treatment (ie some types of tablets and/or insulin) can cause hypos.

## **Suggestions for avoiding low blood glucose levels when driving:**

- Always keep a quick-acting, sugary food or drink (eg glucose tablets, jelly beans, ordinary lemonade) in your car for treating a hypo.
- When driving long distances, try to have a snack every two hours.
- Don't miss or delay your usual meals or snacks.
- Check your blood sugar levels before and during your journey.
- Carry identification both on yourself and in your car indicating that you have diabetes.

## **If you feel hypo when you are driving:**

- **Stop** driving as soon as it is safe to do so.
- **Immediately** take glucose tablets, a sugary drink or sweets. Take your blood glucose reading, if possible.
- Remove the ignition key and move into the passenger seat. This is to avoid any suggestion that you are 'under the influence of drugs' whilst in charge of a car.

## **If you have an accident while hypo**

- You should get legal advice and the support of your diabetes care team. You could also contact Diabetes UK for further help and advice.

## **4. Driving for your work**

- **Diabetes treated by diet or by tablets:** you **can** hold a licence to drive a large goods vehicle (LGV) or to drive passenger carrying vehicle (PCV).

- **Insulin:** Since April 1991, it has been against the law to issue a LGV or PCV licence to a person who treats their diabetes with insulin. If you already hold a PCV or LGV licence, you would automatically lose your licence if your treatment is changed to insulin, even if this is for a short period.
- **Taxi cabs and minicabs:** local councils are responsible for issuing these licences. Their policies vary throughout the UK - contact your local Council for advice.
- **Group 2 licences:** The government recently reviewed the regulations, and changed the law to allow individual medical assessment for C1 licence applications (needed to drive vans weighing 3.5 to 7.5 tonnes). It decided there were not sufficient grounds to extend the proposals to D1 licences (for minibuses).

**For further information contact:**

- **DVLA Drivers' Medical Unit:** Longview Road, Morrision, Swansea SA99 1TU
- **Diabetes UK:** 10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA; Careline 0845 1202 960; [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)
- **Your diabetes team:**
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