

DIABETES: SAFE DRIVING AND THE DVLA

➤ WHY IS THIS LEAFLET FOR YOU?

Having diabetes does not mean that you need to give up driving. It does mean that you have a responsibility to inform certain organisations of your condition and plan before you drive or set off on a trip.

This leaflet will help you ensure that your driving is safe for yourself and other road users. It also includes information on:

- The law: Your responsibilities
- Do I need to notify the DVLA?
- Other circumstances
- What if I have an accident?
- Safe driving

➤ INTRODUCTION

Having diabetes does not mean that you have to give up driving, but it does mean that you need to plan in advance before you get behind the wheel. Complications associated with diabetes can affect your ability to drive, as well as your risk and awareness of hypos.

Hypoglycaemic episodes ("hypos") are when your glucose levels are too low, which can lead to confusion and affect your ability to drive. This can increase the risk of accidents, which bars some people from driving. A severe hypo is when you need help from a third party like a carer, relative or ambulance team.

➤ INFORMATION SENT TO DRIVERS

Insulin-treated drivers are sent a detailed letter from DVLA explaining the licensing requirements and driving responsibilities.

All drivers with diabetes must follow the information provided in 'Information for drivers with diabetes', which includes a notice of when they must contact DVLA.

➤ THE LAW: YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

If you are on a diabetes medication that requires you to inform the DVLA, it is your responsibility to do so – your driving insurance will be invalid if you do not. Your diabetes treatments and circumstances may change over time, so check if this affects your ability to drive and whether you need to contact the DVLA.

For car or motorcycle 1-,2-,or 3-year licences (Group 1), you must meet the following criteria if you use insulin or a tablet which carries a risk of hypoglycaemia:

- You must meet the criteria to drive and notify the DVLA
- You have adequate awareness of the onset of hypoglycaemia. This means that you would have the capability to bring your vehicle to a safe controlled stop if you were hypoglycaemia
- You are regarded as a likely risk to the public while driving
- No more than one episode of severe hypoglycaemia in the preceding 12 months. This includes hypoglycaemia experienced while awake
- You meet the visual standards for acuity and field vision
- You should inform the DVLA if you have more than one severe hypo within the preceding 12 months.
- You should practice appropriate glucose monitoring as described on page 5 of this leaflet.

- If you use insulin, should report any changes in your condition to the DVLA, and you should report practice appropriate glucose monitoring as described on page 4 in this leaflet.
- You should attend regular reviews for your diabetes
- If you use an interstitial monitoring system such as intermittently scanned flash glucose monitoring (isGMS) or real time continuous glucose monitoring (RT-CGM) you must still carry capillary glucose testing equipment for driving purpose. This can then be used when there are time a confirmatory test is required

For bus and lorry (Group 2) 1-year licences (which require annual review), you must meet the following criteria if you take insulin or a tablet which carries a risk of hypoglycaemia:

- You have full awareness of hypoglycaemia.
- No episode of severe hypoglycaemia in the preceding 12 months. This includes hypoglycaemia experienced during the day or night
- You should use a glucose meter with sufficient memory to store 3 months of continuous readings (DVLA INS186,2024). You must practice appropriate glucose monitoring as described on page 5 of this leaflet.
- You can demonstrate an understanding of hypoglycaemia risk.
- You have no disqualifying complications of diabetes, such as problems with your sight.
- You must attend an examination every 12 months with an independent consultant specialising in the treatment of diabetes
- You must have at least 6 continuous weeks of readings available on the memory of your glucose meter for the consultant or GP to inspect
- You must have no other debarring medical condition



> DO I NEED TO NOTIFY THE DVLA?

⚠ You can be fined up to £1,000 if you don't tell the DVLA about a medical condition that affects your driving. You may be prosecuted if you're involved in an accident as a result.

The following information assumes there are no other circumstances that affect your ability to drive safely, particularly regarding your risk of, and your ability to detect hypos. If you are unsure which category your diabetes medication is in, ask your pharmacist or your diabetes healthcare professional.

When to inform the DVLA	Group 1 (Car, motorcycle)	Group 2 (LGV/PCV)
Managed by diet alone	✗	✗
Tablets not included below. These have a low risk of causing hypos so you do not need to monitor your glucose levels	✗	✓
Tablets that carry a risk of hypos. This includes sulphonylureas, such as gliclazide, and glinides (repaglinide and nateglinide). Group 1 & 2 licence holders must monitor glucose levels as indicated in Safe Driving section. Group 2 licence holders need to inform DVLA if taking any medication for diabetes	✗	✓
You should inform the DVLA if you have a severe hypo	More than one episode of severe hypo while awake in the preceding 12 months.	The licence will be refused or revoked.
	Drivers who experience an episode of severe hypo whilst driving must not drive and must notify DVLA.	
	Drivers who have had 2 or more episodes of severe hypo while awake in the last 12 months must not drive and must notify DVLA. DVLA will then carry out medical enquiries before a licensing decision is made.	

Non-insulin injections if taken in conjunction with a sulphonylurea	✘	✔
Insulin	✔	✔
If you have hypo unawareness you must not drive and must notify the DVLA	Driving may resume after a clinical report by a GP or when a Consultant Diabetes Specialist confirms that hypo awareness has been regained.	The licence will be refused or revoked.
If you take insulin for less than 3 months eg. following a heart attack	✘	✔
If you continue to take insulin for more than 3 months after delivery of your baby	✔	✔

Seizures provoked by hypoglycaemia now require a period off driving due to the prospective risk of a further seizure. Both Group 1 and Group 2 must inform DVLA.

➤ INTERSTITIAL GLUCOSE MONITORING SYSTEMS

These devices are more widely known as intermittently scanned flash glucose monitoring (isGMS) systems and real-time continuous glucose monitoring systems (RT-CGM). Following recent changes in the DVLA guidance, Group 2 licence holders can use interstitial glucose monitoring systems. However, not all these people will have access to this type of monitoring.

Group 1 (Car, motorcycle) and Group 2 (LGV/PCV)

These systems may be used for monitoring glucose at times relevant to driving. Users of these systems must carry finger prick capillary glucose testing equipment with a memory function for driving purposes as there are times when a confirmatory finger prick glucose level is required. This includes:

- when the glucose level is 4.0 mmol/L or below
- when symptoms of hypoglycaemia are being experienced
- when the glucose monitoring system gives a reading that is not consistent with the symptoms being experienced (e.g. symptoms of hypoglycaemia and the system reading does not indicate this) - see the INF294 leaflet in DVLA website for further details.

> SAFE DRIVING

- ✓ Keep hypo treatments in the vehicle within easy reach at all times.
- ✓ If you take tablets which carry a risk of hypoglycaemia, you should be offered self-monitoring of glucose levels at times relevant to driving to enable the detection of hypoglycaemia.
- ✓ If you inject insulin or take a sulphonylurea you must check your glucose levels no longer than 2 hours before driving, at the start of your first journey, and then every 2 hours on long journeys. A maximum of 2 hours should pass between the pre-driving glucose test and the first glucose check performed after driving has started. Applicants will be asked to sign an undertaking to comply with the directions of the healthcare professionals treating their diabetes and to report any significant change in their condition to DVLA immediately. More frequent self-monitoring may be required with any greater risk of hypoglycaemia (such as physical activity or altered meal routine). Group 2 drivers on a sulphonylurea or glinide are also required to do this as well as testing at least twice daily.
- ✓ A bus or lorry driver may be licensed if they need to use more than one glucose meter with a memory function to ensure 4 weeks of readings while on insulin are available for assessment.
- ✗ Do not drive if your glucose is 5 mmol/L or less. If your reading is between 4 and 5 mmol/L, eat a small starchy snack like 2 plain biscuits or a piece of fruit. If your glucose is less than 4 mmol/L, treat the hypo and do not drive for at least 45 minutes after you have recovered.

⚠ If you have a hypo while driving, stop the vehicle as soon as possible. Remove the keys to demonstrate you are not in charge of the vehicle, and move into the passenger seat if safe to do so. Treat the hypo as advised. You should not drive for at least 45 minutes after recovery because your response rate will be slower.

How DVLA checks diabetes management requirements for insulin-treated Group 2 bus and lorry licensing

DVLA takes the following measures to ensure the requirements are met for the licensing of insulin-treated Group 2 bus and lorry drivers. Applicants must:

- stop driving Group 2 vehicles when they commence insulin, until DVLA has made a licensing decision
- have a stable medical condition for at least one month before starting a driving licence application

- attend an examination every 12 months by an independent consultant specialist in diabetes

At the examination, the consultant will require sight of glucose self-monitoring records for the previous 4 weeks stored on the memory of a glucose meter.

Applicants will be asked to sign an undertaking to comply with the directions of the healthcare professionals treating their diabetes and to report any significant change in their condition to DVLA immediately.

➤ OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

Your ability to recognise and treat hypos, and the development of diabetes complications, may affect your ability to drive safely. By law, you must inform the DVLA when the following affect you (even if you are only taking medications that fall in the "NO" box mentioned previously):

- You need laser treatment to both eyes, or in the remaining eye if you have sight in one eye only.
- You are unable to read (with glasses or contact lenses if necessary) a car number plate at 20 metres (65 feet).
- You have problems with the circulation or sensation in your legs that means you have to drive automatic vehicles or vehicles with a hand-operated accelerator or brake.
- An existing medical condition gets worse or you develop any other condition that may affect you driving safely.

❗ It is advisable to inform your motor insurance company if you have diabetes to avoid any problems should an accident occur.

➤ WHAT IF I HAVE AN ACCIDENT?

If you have an accident, even if you feel it is not your fault, test your glucose level to demonstrate whether or not you were hypo.

If you have a hypo while driving, you may be charged with driving under the influence of a drug (insulin or diabetes tablet), driving without due care and attention, or dangerous driving. If you have a severe hypo at the wheel, you must inform the DVLA as soon as you can.



> THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Having a hypo means that your glucose level is too low (less than 4 mmol/L).
- Act IMMEDIATELY by eating or drinking something that will raise your glucose levels quickly.
- Never ignore the warning signs.
- Make sure other people know what to do when you are having a hypo.
- Always carry glucose, a glucose meter and diabetes identification.
- Your glucose level must be more than 5mmol/L to drive
- Further information can be found on the DVLA website www.gov.uk under Information for drivers with diabetes. Leaflets INF294, INF188/2 and INF188/5.
- See 'Having a Hypo leaflet' at www.trenddiabetes.online



“Having diabetes does not mean that you have to give up driving...”

> USEFUL RESOURCES:

Trend Diabetes: www.trenddiabetes.online

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving

Diabetes UK Careline: 0345 123 2399



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