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Driving and Epilepsy Q&A

What Driving Regulations Apply to Epilepsy?

When you develop epilepsy your doctor will advise you about the driving regulations as they apply to you. There are two sets of regulations dealing with driving and medical conditions. The current law on driving and epilepsy is based on a European directive from 2010. Further Irish guidelines for doctors called *Slainte agus Tiomaint* (2013) advise on assessing medical conditions (see www.rsa.ie for details).

How do these regulations affect people with epilepsy?

For most people with epilepsy they have to be free of seizures for one year before they are eligible to drive a car, light van, or motorcycle (These are Group 1 licences categories A, A1, B, EB, M and W). When the seizure freedom period has been reached they will need a letter from their doctor confirming this. A person with epilepsy will be kept under annual review by their doctor until five years seizure free.

Are there any exceptions to the 1 year rule?

Yes. There are some exceptions to the one year rule for certain cases. These need to be assessed by an epilepsy specialist or other suitably qualified medical professional.

First or single unprovoked seizures: may drive after 6 months subject to specialist medical assessment.

Initial or isolated seizures: subject to specialist report on period of time off road

Sleep seizures: may drive if this pattern is established for at least 1 year

Seizures with consciousness: may drive if pattern is established for at least 1 year

Provoked seizures: subject to neurological opinion.

Seizures associated with a physician directed change of therapy: advised not to drive from start of withdrawal of treatment and for 6 months after treatment has stopped, or as directed by their consultant.

I don't know which ruling applies to me

If you are unsure what ruling applies to you your doctor can explain this to you. You must comply with your doctor's guidance in respect of driving. For a more detailed explanation of the driving regulations see www.epilepsy.ie or www.rsa.ie for the full text of the legislation.

Do I need to declare epilepsy for licensing?

Yes. Any new diagnosis of epilepsy or breakthrough of seizures in existing epilepsy should be reported to the National Driver Licensing Service (NLDS). When applying for or renewing a license you will need to complete a Medical Report Form D501 stating that you have epilepsy. Under the medical guidelines Slainte agus Tiomaint the driver has a responsibility to report medical conditions using a Patient Advisory Form. Epilepsy Ireland suggests you check with your doctor for guidance.

Am I legally obliged to stop driving if my doctor tells me to?

Yes. You need to be guided by your doctor on this, to continue driving if advised not to is dangerous and against the law.

Can the doctor report me if I keep driving?

The medical guidelines give doctors responsibility to report people who continue driving against medical advice.

What if I'm not happy with NDLS decision?

NDLS have an appeals process for drivers who are not satisfied with a decision made about their licence.

Does my licence need to get re-issued?

Under the medical guidelines there are recommendations for re-issuing of licences. In the case of a person with epilepsy who is eligible to drive it will normally be a three year licence that is re-issued.

Can I get a ten year licence again?

The medical guidelines state that when five years seizure freedom has been reached then a ten year licence may be issued.

Do I need to tell the car insurance company?

Yes. You must declare epilepsy to your car insurance company. There are more risks to not disclosing than to disclosing. Your policy could be null and void if you withhold the information.

Is there a particular company to contact?

No, there is no one particular company we can suggest. Often it's best to remain with your previous insurer but there is no reason not to shop around for a comparative quote.

Will my insurance be high when I drive again?

People often expect that insurance cover will be difficult to obtain or very high. In practice this is rarely so and most people seem to get satisfactory levels of cover. Insurance Ireland can advise you, contact 01-6761914 or see www.insuranceireland.eu

Can I drive a heavy goods vehicle or bus?

Someone with a history of epilepsy may be licensed in these Group 2 categories if they are 10 years seizure free and off medication. In single unprovoked seizures this may be reduced to 5 years seizures without medication. Provoked seizures will be subject to neurological opinion. Medical checks for group 2 licenses are very strict.

See www.rsa.ie for law on Group 2 licences.