Driving, dystonia and the DVLA
What it means for you

If you have any form of dystonia that may affect your ability to drive safely you must by law inform the DVLA.
Motor insurance companies will expect you to inform them also.

How to inform the DVLA?
The best way to inform the DVLA is by post. Phone and email at this stage is not the best way to proceed.
You should write a covering letter including your Driver Number and provide the DVLA with information about your condition and how it affects you, including what actions you take to ensure you drive responsibly.
To give your submission the maximum chance of being processed quickly and of achieving a favourable result it is important that you include a letter confirming your ability to drive safely despite your dystonia. If appropriate, your consultant can provide you with a suitable letter. It would also be helpful to include copies of any current medical reports or information you may have relating to your condition.

You should ensure you have answered the following points in your submission:
• When was your diagnosis made?
• How does the condition affect you?
• What medication / treatment are you having?
• How long have you been having that treatment?
• How does the treatment affect you?
• What is the length of time before treatment works?
• What are the time periods when the treatment is not effective before next treatment?

If you have access to the internet, it would be helpful to download and complete forms CN1 and or V1 which are available on the DVLA website: www.dvla.gov.uk You will find form CN1 under Neurological Conditions and V1 under Visual Problems.
Complete the forms as follows: Click on ‘Medical Rules for drivers’ ► ‘How to tell DVLA about a medical condition’ ► ‘How to tell DVLA if you are applying for or currently hold a driving licence’ Then click the link for either ► ‘Group One drivers’ or ► ‘Group Two drivers’ depending on the type of licence you have.

Once completed, you can download the forms, print them off and send them together with any other correspondence to the DVLA.
If you do not have access to the internet then the DVLA will send you the appropriate forms for you to complete.
Do not send your driving licence at this stage unless you have been advised by your consultant or GP not to drive.

What happens next?
The DVLA may send you a consent form so that it can contact your consultant and / or your GP for advice and information about your condition. The DVLA will want to establish whether in your consultant’s clinical opinion you are safe to drive. You can be assured that individual cases of people with dystonia are most likely to be considered by a DVLA Medical Adviser and not by a non-medical person.
Can I still drive?

Whilst the DVLA is making enquiries, you can still drive under Section 88 of the Road Traffic Act. If your consultant or GP has advised you that you cannot drive you might consider surrendering your licence and re-applying when the condition improves.

The next stage?

Once the DVLA has considered all the evidence they may decide that you are currently able to continue driving safely and issue a licence valid for one to three years. At the end of that period you would need to apply again for a licence. Don’t worry; any new application need not pose a problem for you.

There may be other restrictions placed on the licence such as driving only an automatic car.

The DVLA may also recommend adaptations to make driving easier for you. It is unlikely that you would keep your licence until you are 70 unless medical opinion has indicated that your condition is very stable and causes only very minimal impairment.

What happens if I disagree with the decision?

If at this stage your licence is revoked you have the right to ask the DVLA to reconsider your case. You should do so in writing supplying further medical evidence and ask for a reconsideration of the decision. You will require returning your licence at this stage while your request is being considered.

If you remain dissatisfied with their response you can lodge an appeal with the Magistrates Court. You have to do so within six months in England and Wales and 21 days in Scotland. However, if you have been told by your consultant or GP that you should not drive then there is little point appealing.

What happens if my condition improves?

You can reapply to the DVLA in writing by post giving them all the information you can, once again include your Driver Number. You may have to undergo a ‘Driving Assessment’ to determine how safe your driving is. You can cancel or postpone the appointment if there is good reason for not undertaking the assessment on a particular day. You must ensure adequate notice is given. If you cancel repeatedly, the DVLA may decide to withdraw the licence until you are well enough to be assessed.

What will it cost me?

There should be no cost to you for renewing or reapplying for your driving licence if this is on medical grounds.

Why was my driving licence revoked without considering my case?

Up until a few years ago, it was DVLA policy that someone with severe blepharospasm would have to surrender their licence regardless of whether they were receiving treatment. This was because, at the time, less was known about blepharospasm and the beneficial effects of treatment with botulinum toxin. It is quite possible that people with blepharospasm whose application was previously rejected may now be able to successfully reapply to the DVLA to have their licence returned.

Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) and driving

If DBS is used for a movement disorder, the licence holder can drive when there is no debarring residual impairment likely to affect safe driving. Additional criteria may need to be met if a seizure or other medical event has occurred.

In all cases it is wise to discuss driving with your consultant. It is still important to advise DVLA and your motor insurance company of your circumstances.
Other useful information about driving

The RAC have looked at the cost of motoring and have identified that if you drive less than 4,000 miles a year it may not be cost effective to run a car. If you have a bus pass you may find that using buses and taxis may work out cheaper.

Don’t forget your motor insurance company: How should you best inform them?

This will depend on the advice given to you by your motor insurance company either in your policy or on the insurance certificate. Most insurance companies will expect you to declare that you have dystonia. Failure to do so may invalidate your cover.

NB If you have any difficulties with DVLA or if your licence application has been refused please contact the Helpline at The Dystonia Society on 0845 458 6322 they might be able to help you.

Important Note

The contents of these Information Sheets are provided only as information and are in no way intended to replace the advice of a qualified medical practitioner or professional government advisor. The Society strongly advises anyone viewing this material to seek qualified advice on all matters relating to their treatment and / or circumstances. Furthermore, rapid advances in medicine and changes to government legislation may cause information contained in the Information Sheets to become outdated.

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