

# 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



## > WHAT IS A "HYPO"?

Hypoglycaemic episodes ("hypos") are when your blood 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. 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.



## > 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 have adequate awareness of hypoglycaemia.
- No more than one episode of severe hypoglycaemia, while awake, in the preceding 12 months or the most recent episode occurred more than 3 months ago. Severe hypoglycaemia is defined as requiring the assistance of another person.
- You must practice appropriate blood glucose monitoring as described on page 5 of this leaflet.
- If you use insulin, you will have to sign to say you will comply with healthcare professionals' instructions, report any changes in your conditions to the DVLA, and you will practice appropriate blood glucose monitoring as described on page 5 in this leaflet.
- You are under regular review.

For bus and lorry (Group 2) 1-year licences (which require annual review), you must meet the following criteria:

- You have full awareness of hypoglycaemia.
- No episode of severe hypoglycaemia in the preceding 12 months.
- You must use a blood glucose meter with sufficient memory to store 3 months of readings. You must practice appropriate blood 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 to your sight.

## > 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.

Your diabetes treatment	Group 1 (Car, motorcycle)	Group 2 (LGV/PCV)
Managed by diet alone	✗	✗
Tablets not included below. These have a low risk of causing hypos	✗	✓
Tablets that carry a risk of hypos. This includes sulphonylureas, such as gliclazide, and glinides (repaglinide and nateglinide)	✗	✓
Non-insulin injections	✗	✓
Insulin	✓	✓
Temporary insulin for less than 3 months (e.g. following a heart attack or during gestational diabetes)	✗	✓



## ➤ 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 blood 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.

## > SAFE DRIVING

- ✓ Keep hypo treatments in the car within easy reach at all times.
- ✓ If you take tablets which carry a risk of hypoglycaemia, you should be offered self-monitoring of blood glucose at times relevant to driving to enable the detection of hypoglycaemia.
- ✓ If you inject insulin, check your blood glucose no longer than 2 hours before driving and then every 2 hours on long journeys. Group 2 drivers (bus/lorry) on a sulphonylurea or glinide are also required to do this as well as testing at least twice daily.
- ✓ If you are using a continuous glucose monitoring system, you should also monitor your blood glucose using a finger-prick device to meet driving regulations.
- ✗ Do not drive if your blood 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 blood 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 car as soon as possible. Remove the keys to demonstrate you are not in charge of the car, 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.**

## > THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Having a hypo means that your blood glucose level is too low (less than 4 mmol/L).
- Act IMMEDIATELY by eating or drinking something that will raise your blood glucose quickly.
- Never ignore the warning signs.
- Make sure other people know what to do when you are having a hypo.
- Always carry glucose, a blood glucose meter and diabetes identification.



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

## > USEFUL RESOURCES:

TREND-UK: [www.trend-uk.org](http://www.trend-uk.org)

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: [www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving](http://www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving)

Diabetes UK: ☎ 0345 123 2399

Diabetes UK careline: 0345 123 2399



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