



Driver & Vehicle  
Licensing  
Agency

# A guide to insulin treated diabetes and driving

Drivers who have any form of diabetes treated with any insulin preparation must inform DVLA.



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## Hypoglycaemia and safe driving

### What is hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia (also known as a hypo) is the medical term for a low blood glucose (sugar) level.

### Severe hypoglycaemia means a drop in blood glucose levels needing help from another person

Low blood glucose is the greatest risk to safe driving.

When blood glucose falls below 4 mmol/L, your reaction time slows, your judgement is affected, and driving may become erratic. Even if you have never had a low reading, the risk increases the longer you have been on insulin. In extreme cases, very low blood glucose can lead to unconsciousness. Most people get warning signs when blood glucose drops below 4 mmol/L. However, signs may fade with age or prolonged insulin use, increasing danger to yourself and others.

### Never ignore warning signs while driving – stop safely as soon as possible

Early warning signs include:

- sweating
- shakiness or trembling
- feeling hungry
- fast pulse or palpitations
- anxiety
- tingling lips

If you do not treat this, it may result in more severe symptoms such as:

- slurred speech
- difficulty concentrating
- confusion
- disorderly or irrational behaviour (this may resemble drunkenness)

If left untreated this may lead to unconsciousness.

### Low blood glucose episodes during sleep

Frequent low blood glucose episodes during sleep should be discussed with your healthcare professional. This usually doesn't affect your application for a car or motorcycle (group 1) driving licence, unless your awareness is impaired.

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## Monitoring glucose (sugar) while driving

Both car and motorcycle (group 1) and lorry and bus (group 2) drivers are now legally allowed to monitor glucose (sugar) levels using:

- Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM)
- finger prick glucose monitoring

### What you must do:

- **carry your monitor** at all times
- check your glucose (sugar) levels:
  - at least twice a day, even on non-driving days
  - just before you start driving
  - continuing to check **at least every 2 hours** during your journey
  - ensuring that **no more than 2 hours** has passed between glucose (sugar) checks at any time during your journey
- **pull over safely** before testing or checking your device

## Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGM)

- if using CGM, use a medically approved CGM device that's non-adjunctive (approved for treatment decisions based on CGM readings alone)
- **keep a finger-prick monitor** as backup and use it to confirm your glucose level if your CGM device or sensor isn't working, or if your CGM reading doesn't match how you feel
- **trust your symptoms** – don't rely solely on CGM if you feel unwell
- carry spares including test strips, lancets, and batteries
- carry ID showing you have diabetes in case of an accident
- take extra care during changes of insulin regimens, changes of lifestyle, exercise, travel and pregnancy
- eat regular meals or snacks and take breaks on long journeys

**Note:** device alarms are a helpful tool but they should support, not replace your own awareness of low blood glucose symptoms or regular self-checks.

## Safe driving requirements

Don't drive if your glucose (sugar) level is 4.0mmol/L or below. If your glucose (sugar) is between 4.0 mmol/L and 5.0mmol/L, eat a fast-acting carbohydrate snack, for example, glucose tablets, sweets or a sugary drink.

If you experience low glucose (sugar) levels while driving:

- stop the vehicle safely as soon as possible
- switch off the engine, remove the keys from the ignition
- wait at least 45 minutes after glucose (sugar) levels return to at least 5.0mmol/L or above before driving again – this allows brain function and reaction time to fully recover
- carry identification that shows you have diabetes and are treated with insulin, in case of injury in a road traffic accident
- take extra care during changes of insulin treatments, lifestyle change, exercise, travel and pregnancy
- eat regular meals or snacks and take breaks on long journeys

You must stay in full control of your vehicle at all times. The police can stop you if they think you're not in control because you're distracted, and you can be prosecuted.

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## When to tell DVLA

### Car or motorcycle (group 1) drivers

You must tell DVLA if:

- you have had 2 or more episodes of a severe drop in blood glucose whilst awake within the last 12 months that leaves you confused or impaired, and you need someone else to help you recover
- you develop difficulty in recognising signs of low blood glucose

### Lorry or bus (group 2) drivers

You must stop driving and tell DVLA if:

- you have a single episode of low blood glucose levels that leaves you confused or impaired, and you need someone else to help you recover, even if this happened during sleep
- you have any difficulty in recognising low blood glucose symptoms

### All drivers (Group 1 and Group 2)

You must tell DVLA if:

- you suffer a severe episode of low blood glucose whilst driving
- you or your medical team feel you are at high risk of developing low blood glucose

- an existing health condition gets worse, or you develop any other condition that may affect your ability to drive safely

## Eyesight requirements

You must:

- be able to read a car number plate (with glasses or corrective lenses if necessary) from a distance of 20 metres (around the length of 5 parked cars)
- have a visual acuity of at least 6/12 on the Snellen scale (decimal 0.5) with both eyes open or in the working eye if monocular (with the aid of glasses or contact lenses if worn)

## Limb problems

Limb problems or amputations are unlikely to prevent driving. They may be overcome by driving certain types of vehicles, for example automatics or those with hand controls.

## How to contact us

Go to [www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions](http://www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions)

Call us on 0300 790 6806 (8am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm on Saturday).

Write to:

Drivers Medical Group  
DVLA  
Swansea  
SA99 1TU

## When did you last get your eyes tested?

If you drive, make sure you do it at least every 2 years.

[www.gov.uk/driving-eyesight-rules](http://www.gov.uk/driving-eyesight-rules)

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with our latest news  
and services at:  
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