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Driving and MSA

People living with MSA often have questions about the impact their condition will have on their ability to drive. This factsheet contains initial information on the practical aspects of driving and MSA such as, informing the DVLA and your insurance company.

Do I have to inform the DVLA that I have MSA?

Yes, you are obliged to tell the DVLA that you have a diagnosis of MSA. If you fail to inform the DVLA of a health problem, you are committing a criminal offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988. Having MSA does not automatically mean that your licence will be revoked, although you may be required to have a medical test (which will be carried out by a doctor chosen by the DVLA) or take a driving test. Medicals and driving tests under these circumstances are free and you would be given priority at a driving test centre, although travel costs incurred may be your responsibility.

You can inform the DVLA by calling them on 0333 790 6806. They are open 8.00am-5.30pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am-1.00pm on Saturdays.

Further information about medical conditions and driving can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions>.

If you live in Ireland further details can be found here - <https://www.ndls.ie/medical-reports.html>.

The DVLA does make every effort to ensure that people with health problems or disabilities stay as mobile as possible.

What happens next?

You will be asked to complete a form called a PK1, 'Medical in Confidence'. On this you will need to give details of your GP and Specialist or Parkinson's Nurse Specialist (which is a legal requirement) and details of recent hospital or clinic visits. In most cases the DVLA will contact your Specialist for further information about your fitness to drive. The DVLA will then decide if a driving test or medical is required. Following this they will reach one of the decisions outlined below:

- to give you a licence without any restriction
- to give you a licence for one, two or three years. This decision is reviewed when the licence runs out

- to refuse or withdraw your licence
- to restrict the licence to particular vehicles with adaptations.

The DVLA aim to make a decision within 90 working days. If the DVLA decides you cannot have a licence, it will return any fee you sent with the application form.

Can I challenge the DVLA's decision?

If you are not happy with any decision made by the DVLA, you can challenge the decision by:

- asking the DVLA to reconsider its decision
- appealing against the decision in the Magistrates' Court (Sheriff Court in Scotland).

In the first instance you should write to the DVLA explaining why you feel the decision is wrong. The DVLA will generally reconsider the decision but will expect the request to be supported by fresh medical evidence. You may need to ask your GP to refer you to a Specialist who can provide this, and you might have to pay for the letter that the Specialist writes.

If the DVLA does not change its decision, you can appeal to the Magistrates or Sheriff's court. The appeal must be lodged with the magistrates' court within six months (21 days to the Sheriff Court) of the revocation or refusal of the licence.

In our experience, most people living with MSA will come to a decision about the right time to stop driving. Most people recognise when their slower reactions, altered spatial awareness, susceptibility to dizziness with blood pressure problems or perhaps drowsiness due to medication impacts on their ability to drive safely. Whilst we appreciate that not being able to drive any longer has a huge impact on a person's independence, their safety, their passenger's safety and at that of other road users is paramount.

What about insurance?

You should inform your insurance company of any change in your health that may affect your ability to drive. It is an offence under the Road Traffic Act to make a false statement or withhold information for the purposes of obtaining a certificate of motor insurance. It may also invalidate your policy. You should also inform your insurers about any adaptations made to the insured vehicle.

Useful information

- The advice from the DVLA is that you could be committing a road traffic offence if you cannot safely control the vehicle that you drive at all times
- If you are in receipt of the enhanced rate of the mobility component for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) then you may be entitled to vehicle tax exemption. If you get the standard rate mobility component of PIP you may be entitled to a 50% discount off your vehicle tax. If you don't drive but someone drives for you, then they can apply for exemption, providing the vehicle is used solely for your purposes. More information can be found at - <http://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-tax-exemption-disability>
- Information about mobility centres around the UK can be found at - <https://www.drivingmobility.org.uk/find-a-centre/>

- If you would like to have your driving assessed and be given recommendations for maintaining safe driving, consider booking a course at - <http://www.rdac.co.uk/>. The driving assessors also have a responsibility to let you know if you are not safe to drive and can revoke your license if necessary, for the safety of everyone.

More information about driving and medical conditions can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition>

Drivers Medical Group
DVLA
Swansea
SA99 1TU

Key points to remember

If you are in receipt of the enhanced or standard rate of the mobility component for Personal Independence Payment, then you may be entitled to full or partial vehicle tax exemption. If you don't drive but someone drives for you, then they can apply for exemption, providing the vehicle is used solely for your purposes. More information can be found at:
<http://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-tax-exemption-disability>.

The Trust's contact details

We have MSA Health Care Specialists that support people affected by MSA in the UK and Ireland. If you would like to find the MSA Health Care Specialist for your area, contact us on the details below or use the interactive map here – <https://www.msatrust.org.uk/support-for-you/hcps/>.

MSA Trust, 51 St Olav's Court, Lower Road, London SE16 2XB

T: 0333 323 4591 | E: support@msatrust.org.uk | W: www.msatrust.org.uk

REVISION DATE: 11/19 | REVIEW DATE: 11/22 | VERSION: 1.

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References for this information sheet are available by contacting support@msatrust.org.uk.

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