

DRIVING AND EPILEPSY

FACT SHEET



DRIVING AND EPILEPSY

Epilepsy can significantly impact a person's ability to drive safely.

Losing your driver's licence can have a huge impact on your life - getting to and from work, driving family around, maintaining social contact, independence and accessing everyday needs.

It is important to remember that when your licence is initially suspended, it may not be permanent and, if you meet the criteria to be able to drive, you will be able to drive again - safely and legally.



Your first seizure

If you have a seizure, your doctor will let you know you need to stop driving and how long before you can drive again. This period is usually 6 months but will depend on the circumstances around the seizure and your diagnosis. You will need to:

- take anti-seizure medication regularly as prescribed (if prescribed).
- make sure you get enough sleep (7-8 hours) and not drive when sleep-deprived.
- avoid circumstances, or use of substances (alcohol or drugs), that are known to increase the risk of seizures.

If medication is prescribed and you refuse to follow the treating doctor's recommendation to take anti-seizure medication, it is likely you will be assessed as unfit to drive.

What about a seizure that isn't diagnosed as epilepsy?

Not everyone who has a seizure has epilepsy.

Some seizures happen because of temporary health problems, such as illness, injury, alcohol, or low blood sugar. These are called "provoked seizures" and are not considered epilepsy.

In these cases, your doctor will advise you to stop driving for a defined period. You may be able to drive again once the cause is resolved and as long as it doesn't happen again.

Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES)

People with active PNES should generally not drive if they lose awareness or responsiveness with their seizures, have a history of seizure related injuries, or if the symptoms suggests their ability to drive would be diminished during a seizure.



- When you have your first seizure, ask your treating doctor about driving. You need to follow instructions you are given, which will include how long you must refrain from driving.

YOUR LICENCE

Guidelines about health and driving were developed by medical experts and are agreed to by the driving licensing authorities (DLA) nationally. Your doctor or specialist does not make the rules but provides advice, based on the guidelines, about how your epilepsy might affect your ability to drive safely.

The DLA will consider the advice of your doctor but make the final decision about your licence status. The guidelines are to ensure fitness to drive of each person is assessed in a consistent manner.

Not all seizures or seizure types will pose a risk to driving. In some situations, the DLA may allow you to return to driving sooner than the usual guidelines suggest. These are discussed in detail in the [Austroads document](#)

Your Licence

General considerations

Any person experiencing seizures, blackouts or episodes of memory loss should see a doctor, so the risk of further episodes and the need for treatment can be determined.

Correct diagnosis of epilepsy or seizure type is important. It means the right treatment is started and assessment for driving can be considered.

There are some seizure types and circumstances that offer no real danger and have little impact on a person's driving ability

Conditional licences

Sometimes a conditional licence will be permitted.

This means that the person can continue to drive, if certain conditions or restrictions are met. They are a means of balancing safety requirements with the needs of drivers.

Private & Commercial

Different licences have different regulations. There are two sets of guidelines, one for drivers of private vehicles and one for drivers of commercial vehicles.

Can I keep my driving licence card?

Usually, you can retain your licence card for identification purposes and to use if or when you are safe to drive again.

Australian Guidelines

The Australian guidelines were created to protect public safety. They specify to be able to drive:

- You must be seizure free for a specified period
- You must take antiseizure medication regularly as prescribed unless your specialist recommends changes
- You should ensure that you have adequate sleep and not drive if sleep deprived
- You may need to abstain from alcohol and other drugs. It is vital that you feel able and safe to drive



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES



- You must notify the DLA in your state or territory if you have a seizure or are diagnosed with epilepsy
- You are responsible for ensuring you are well enough to drive safely, have good seizure control and comply with medical treatment
- You must also respond truthfully to questions from health professionals regarding your condition and the likely impact on your ability to drive
- If issued with a conditional licence, you are expected to comply with any enforced driving restrictions
- If you are planning any reduction, withdrawal or change of antiseizure medication, you must not drive for this period, or a period specified by your doctor
- You should avoid circumstances and triggers that are known to increase the risk of your seizures
- It is good practice to have regular reviews with your doctor.

You must not drive during periods of medication reduction, withdrawal or changes.

Telling the Authorities

The law requires you to report to your DLA, any permanent or long-term illness that is likely to affect your ability to drive safely.

The DLA always makes the final decision about your licence status. They will consider the advice of your doctor and other factors such as your accident history and the type of vehicle you drive.

What if I don't tell the authorities?

Driving against medical advice is illegal and dangerous to you, your passengers and the public. There are many safety issues to consider as seizures often occur without warning.

If you continue to drive despite your doctor's advice and you do not report your condition to the DLA, you are not fulfilling your legal responsibility.

If you are driving and involved in an accident during the recommended non-driving period and a seizure was a contributing factor, you may be prosecuted, charged and/or jailed and the conditions of your insurance policy may not be honoured. You may also have difficulty obtaining insurance in the future.

GETTING TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

It is not always possible to get financial assistance for travel.

There are taxi subsidies available, and Centrelink offers a mobility allowance. Both forms of assistance have strict criteria that must be met before they are approved. Unfortunately, not all people are suitable for these forms of assistance.

Mobility Allowance

[Centrelink's Mobility Allowance](#) supports people with disabilities who are unable to use public transport without substantial assistance. Unfortunately, this may be difficult to obtain without a physical disability.

Taxi Subsidy Scheme

This scheme subsidises the cost of travel by taxi for those who are unable to use public transport, due to disability. Applicants must meet strict eligibility criteria and require a supporting letter from their doctor. *Each state has its own scheme.* Check online regarding the taxi subsidy scheme in your state or territory.

Transport tips:

- Car-pooling – ask for a lift from family, friends or colleagues
- Public transport – catch the bus, tram, train or ferry
- Ride a bike - if it is safe – off road tracks only if seizures are not controlled
- Walk
- Investigate travel subsidies

Reminder:

- Seizures can affect your ability to drive safely
- You must report epilepsy to the driving licensing authority in your state
- You are legally responsible for making sure you are well enough to drive safely
- All states and territories in Australia have laws about reporting health conditions that might affect a person's ability to drive safely
- These laws have been created to protect public safety

For more information:

It is important that you familiarise yourself with both the general driving information, the advice of your doctor, and the standards outlined in the Austroads document when considering your fitness to drive.

- Contact the [Driver Licensing Authority in your State or Territory](#).
- [Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive](#)
- EAA Website - [General information on epilepsy and driving](#).

References:

- [Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive](#) Accessed Jul 2025
- [Epilepsy Society of Australia](#) Accessed Jul 2025
- [SafeWork Australia](#) Accessed Jul 2025

For more information go to our website



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[Book a telehealth appointment with an Epilepsy Nurse](#)