

Medical matters

Many common medical conditions can affect your ability to drive and could put you and other road users at risk. Around 49 million people hold a GB driving licence with around 757,000 drivers telling us about their medical condition last year. But how do medical professionals know which conditions will affect our driving?

To help clinicians assess their patients' fitness to drive, we provide an ['Assessing fitness to drive: guide for medical professionals'](#) (AFTD) and update it every 6 months.

My role and AFTD

I joined DVLA in March 2015, bringing around 38 years' experience – first as a doctor, then a surgeon, and finally as an A&E consultant. This background has been essential in this job, reminding me that there's an individual behind each case.

I work with DVLA management colleagues as well as being the professional lead for DVLA doctors and act as the conduit between DVLA doctors and the General Medical Council (GMC).

Part of my role is to lead on updating AFTD.

AFTD helps clinicians decide if a patient's ability to drive might be impaired by a medical condition, treatment, or even certain medications. They use AFTD to advise their patients if they need to tell DVLA about their medical condition and if they can meet the medical standard to drive.

It also helps clinicians provide advice on driving while DVLA makes medical enquiries about the patient.



Dr Nick Jenkins, DVLA's Senior Doctor.

Medical panels

Twice a year, we host [Secretary of State medical panel meetings](#) about each type of condition that could affect driving and these panels corresponds with a chapter in AFTD .

The medical panel comprises of independent nationally and internationally renowned medical experts in each field: me as Senior Doctor (or my deputy), staff from our medical areas, and lay members who offer the perspective of those using our services. We talk about any changes in medicine related to the topic, any issues that have arisen in that field, and any complex medical cases.

Last year this worked slightly differently. When the coronavirus pandemic resulted in the first lockdown in 2020, we immediately turned our focus on contingency planning for the autumn round of panels and how we would host them through conferencing software.

The autumn panels played out seamlessly and we've had some great feedback from those involved. It's really given us opportunities to work smarter.

After the panel meetings

Once we've agreed what changes need to be made we make arrangements to update AFTD. Some updates are more complex than others, so [we work closely with the relevant medical charities](#) to make sure the changes cover everything needed.

The guidance is updated and published on GOV.UK. As soon as the guidance goes live, we tell DVLA colleagues, the GMC and our [email subscribers](#). We'll also have updated the corresponding medical pages within '[Check if a health condition affects your driving](#)' (an A-Z guide of medical conditions).

By law you must tell DVLA about a medical condition that affects your driving. The [A-Z guide](#) helps you meet your legal responsibility, as it tells you which conditions you need to tell us about (and the ones you do not).



What happens after you've told us about your medical condition

We may need to make further investigations, get reports from your consultant, or contact your doctor. This can sometimes take a bit of time, especially if doctors are busy, but while your application is with us you may still be able to drive under Section 88 of The Road Traffic Act. You should speak with your doctor about [the Section 88 criteria](#) and decide whether you should drive while you are waiting for a licence to be issued.

Most people who [report a medical condition](#), which can be done online, get to

keep their driving licence. We may issue a short-term licence (1 to 5 years) if you've got a medical condition considered to be progressive.

This is because we'll need to assess the ongoing stability of the condition or consider the risk of recurrence of an episode being below a certain threshold. Examples of this kind of condition are dementia, epilepsy, and diabetes.

If you're a driver and have had, or currently suffer from, a medical condition or disability that affects your driving, [you must tell DVLA](#).

If you're a medical professional you can keep up to date with any future changes to the guidance, including changes to medical standards, by [signing up for our email alert service](#). Simply go to the option named 'DVLA Stakeholders' and select 'Medical Professionals'.

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