

Driving after injury

This leaflet sets out advice on driving legally and safety following an injury resulting in a visit to the Emergency Department.

Important information

If you are a vehicle driver or a motorcyclist there are some things that you need to be aware of:

1. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure they are fit to drive, and are accountable for their actions and decisions when driving.
2. If you are involved in an accident or stopped by the police you may be asked to prove that you are in full control of your vehicle.
3. You do not need to contact the DVLA unless your injury is expected to last for longer than three months. *The 1988 Road Traffic Act*
4. If you drive a heavy goods vehicle or a public service vehicle, e.g. bus or train the rules may be more strict. Please inform your employer of your injury and seek advice from the DVLA.
5. Please discuss your injury with your insurance company. Your injury may invalidate your insurance.
6. When assessing your fitness to drive, please consider any medication you are taking. Is it affecting your ability to think clearly or your reaction time should an emergency arise? If either is reduced, you should not drive your vehicle.
7. If you are not sleeping at night due to your injury, this could have an effect on your co-ordination. Section 91 of the Highway Code "Driving when you are tired greatly increases your risk of collision". If you feel tired and sleepy you should not drive until you are rested.
8. If you have a plaster cast or splint to treat your injury, this will reduce your range of movements. You will need to assess your movement prior to driving.
9. All vehicles, injuries and patients vary. You will need to assess your injury in your own vehicle. Hand dominance, power steering, manual or automatic transmission will all impact on your self assessment.

Use this tool to assess your ability to drive your vehicle

Adapted from Carter T (2006) Fitness to drive: A guide for Health Professionals page 157. The Royal Society of Medicine.

1. For assessment of lower leg strength, endurance, range of motion and balance

Measure 3 metres (10 ft) along a path and walk along it as quickly as possible. It is timed from the first foot being lifted to the finish line. If it takes longer than 9 seconds this may indicate that your lower limbs are not strong enough for safe driving.

2. To assess capability with vehicle controls and manoeuvring

Neck rotation – can you look over either shoulder in order to be able to reverse?

Finger curl – make a strong fist with both hands.

Shoulder and elbow flexion – pretend you are holding a steering wheel. Now turn the wheel all the way to the right and then all the way to the left.

Ankle flexion – can you pretend you are pressing the accelerator hard. Now bring your toes up towards you.

If you are hesitant or limited in making any of these movements, or they cause you pain, your ability to drive safely will be affected.

3. To assess your strength

Ask someone to provide some light resistance against these movements

1. Test your ability to lift your arms in the air, like you are putting your hand up at school, bring them back down to your side.
2. Move your legs forward and back from the hip
4. Move hand up and down to test your wrist movements and strength.
5. Move your foot up and down to test your ankle movement and strength
6. Test Hand grip strength.

Each movement can be scored using this scale

0=No movement

1= Muscle contracts but no movement

2= Some movement but not against gravity

3=Movement against gravity

4= Movement against light resistance

5=Movement against strong resistance

These tests are subjective, if you are unable to score 5 on each one of the 6 tests, this indicates that you may not be safe to drive.

If you are unsure whether you are able to drive safely you can request an expert “on road” assessment via the DVLA.

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

You can also pick up a copy of the Trust leaflet called ‘Talk to us’, which explains how you can raise concerns or give feedback on your experience at the hospital.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – *How likely are you to recommend our service to family and friends if they needed similar care or treatment?* - by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-in-touch/friends-and-family-survey.htm.

Further information

DVLA http://www.dft.gov.uk/dvla/medical/about_dri_med.aspx

Highway Code http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/DG_069855

More information is available on the Trust website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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