

Hypoglycaemia

Hypoglycaemia episodes 'Hypos' are when your blood glucose levels are too low (less than 4mmol/l), which can lead to confusion and affect your ability to drive. This can increase the risk of accidents, which can bar some people from driving.

Having diabetes does not mean that you have to give up driving, but it does mean that you need to plan in advance before you get behind the wheel.

Complications associated with diabetes can affect your ability to drive, as well as your risk and awareness of 'hypos'.

The Law: Your Responsibilities

If you are on diabetes medication that requires you to inform the DVLA, (see table) it is your responsibility to do so. Your diabetes treatments and circumstances may change over time, so check if this affects your ability to drive and whether you need to contact DVLA.

The law regarding driving **Group 2 vehicles (LGV/PVC/ bus /lorry)** when using insulin has changed. If you can demonstrate that you meet the following criteria, then you may be able to drive Group 2 vehicles.

- You have well controlled diabetes (with evidence from 3 months of results on a blood glucose meter memory)
- You have had no episodes of severe hypoglycaemia (needing the help of another person)
- You have early warning signs when your blood glucose begins to drop to low levels
- For more information, contact the DVLA and discuss with your diabetes team

Do I Need to Notify the DVLA?

The information below assumes there are no other circumstances that affect your ability to drive safely, particularly regarding your risk of and ability to detect 'hypos'.

If you are unsure what a 'hypo' is, or which category your diabetes medication is in, please ask your pharmacist or your diabetes healthcare professional.

Your Diabetes Treatment	Group 1 car / motorcycle	Group 2 (LGV/PCV bus /lorry)
1. Managed by diet alone	✗	✗
2. Tablets not included below. e.g metformin used alone	✗	✗
3. Non-insulin injections, unless you are also taking one of the tablets below	✗	✓
4. Tablets that carry a risk of hypos. This includes sulphonylureas, such as gliclazide and glinides (repaglinide and nateglinide)	✗	✓
5. Insulin	✓	✓
6. Temporary insulin (e.g. following a heart attack or during gestational diabetes)	✗	✓

N.B. It is advisable to inform your motor insurance company if you have diabetes to avoid any problems should an accident occur

Other Circumstances

Your ability to recognise and treat 'hypos', and the development of diabetes complications, may affect your ability to drive safely.

By law, you must inform the DVLA when the following affect you (even if you are only taking medication that fall into the no (✗) category in the table shown.

- You need laser treatment to both eyes, or in the remaining eye if you have sight in one eye only
- You are unable to read (with glasses or contact lenses if necessary) a car number plate at 20.5m (67ft) or 20m (65ft) where narrower characters are used
- You develop any problems with circulation or sensation in your legs or feet that make it necessary for you to drive certain types of vehicles only (e.g. Automatic vehicles or vehicles with hand-operated accelerator or brake)
- You suffer from more than one episode of disabling hypoglycaemia (needing help from another person) within 12 months, or if you or your carer feel you are at high risk of developing disabling hypoglycaemia. For group 2 drivers one episode of severe hypoglycaemia must be reported immediately
- You develop impaired awareness of hypoglycaemia (delay or difficulty in recognising the warning symptoms of low blood glucose)
- You suffer disabling hypoglycaemia while driving
- An existing medical condition that may affect you driving safely

What if I Have an Accident?

- If you have an accident, even if you feel it is not your fault, test your blood glucose level to demonstrate whether or not you were 'hypo'
- If you have a 'hypo' whilst driving, you may be charged with driving under the influence of a drug (Insulin or diabetes tablet), driving without due care and attention, or dangerous driving
- If you have a 'hypo'; at the wheel, you must inform the DVLA as soon as you can

Safe Driving

- Keep glucose treatments in the car within easy reach of the driver at all times
- If you inject insulin, check your blood glucose before driving. You may need to do this if you take tablets that may cause hypos. Group 2 drivers (bus / lorry) on a sulphonylurea or glinide are required by law to monitor glucose level at least twice daily and at times relevant to driving
- Don't drive if your blood glucose level is less than 5.5 mmol/l and you are taking a diabetes treatment that can cause 'hypos'. If so, have a small starchy snack, eg a couple of plain biscuits or a piece of fruit

If you have a hypo whilst driving, stop the car as soon as possible. Remove the keys to demonstrate you are not in charge of the vehicle and move into the passenger seat if safe to do so. Treat the hypo as advised.

You should not drive for at least 45 minutes after recovery because your response rates will be slower

Remember...

- Having a 'hypo' means that your blood glucose level is too low (< 4.0 mmol/l)
- Act IMMEDIATELY by eating or drinking something that will raise your blood glucose quickly
- Never ignore the warning signs
- Make sure other people know what to do when you are having a 'hypo'
- Always carry glucose and diabetes identification

Consequences of frequent hypos:

- You may not recognise future 'hypos'
- Fear and anxiety of getting further 'hypos'
- Effects on employment and driving

If you are concerned about anything within this leaflet please discuss this with your Diabetes Team

Further Information

Diabetes Specialist Nurses Helpline

T: (0116) 258 4919 (LGH)

T: (0116) 258 5545 (LRI)

- www.leicestershirediabetes.org.uk
- Diabetes UK Careline: 0845 120 2960
- www.diabetes.org.uk
- www.directgov.uk (DVLA)

Acknowledgements

T.R.E.N.D-UK

Safe Driving and the DVLA



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A Guide for Patients and Carers