

What to do when a patient is unfit to drive: Summary Guidance

RESOURCES

- Follow DVLA guidance: [Assessing fitness to drive: a guide for medical professionals](#).¹
- Different standards apply to professional drivers such as HGV drivers and bus drivers.
- If you are unsure if a condition reaches the threshold, discuss with a medical colleague or discuss the case anonymously with a medical advisor at the DVLA.²

STEP 1

If the patient's condition or treatment is affecting their safety as a driver^{1,3,4}

- Inform the patient that:
 - It is their legal duty to inform the DVLA.
 - They should **NOT** drive in the meantime.
- Consider what options are available to support safe driving for example: patient education on driving whilst in pain and/or taking analgesics, medication review with a plan to taper down the medications causing adverse effects or car adaptations.
- Provide patient information leaflet on [Driving and Pain](#) and DVLA contact details.⁵
- Consider whether another opinion may be helpful, e.g. occupational therapist or driving assessor.
- Document your discussion clearly and comprehensively.

If the patient refuses to accept the effect of their condition or treatment on their ability to drive^{1,3,4}

- Suggest a second opinion and help to arrange this.
- Be clear that they should **NOT** drive in the meantime.
- Inform patient that it is ultimately the DVLA advisers that determine whether someone is fit to drive.
- Discuss your concerns with their relatives, friends and carers (as long as the patient agrees).
- If patient is incapable of understanding inform the DVLA yourself as soon as possible.

A person with persistence misuse or dependence must NOT drive and must notify the DVLA

STEP 2

If the patient continues to drive when they may not be fit to do so^{1,3,4}

- Make every reasonable effort to persuade patient to stop driving.
- Explain that health care professionals are obliged to disclose relevant medical information to the DVLA if they continue to drive when they may not be fit to do so.
- Consider the risk of the patient's action to themselves and to the wider public.
- If you think **refusal to stop** driving leaves others exposed to the risk of death or serious harm or the patient does not understand your advice contact the DVLA promptly and disclose any relevant information in confidence to a medical adviser. Whenever and wherever possible inform the patient before you make a disclosure and consider any objections raised.
- Advise patient in writing and document your actions in medical records clearly and comprehensively.

While respecting patient confidentiality, healthcare professionals have a wider duty to protect and promote the health of both patients and the public

Further information

- Faculty of Pain Medicine [Driving and Pain. Information for Patients](#)
- Faculty of Pain Medicine [Driving and Pain. Guidance for Faculty of Pain Medicine Members](#)

References

1. DVLA (2019) [Assessing fitness to drive: a guide for medical professionals](#); 2. DVLA contact medadviser@dvla.gov.uk Tel 01792 782337 (10.30-13.00 hrs Monday to Fridays); 3. GMC [Confidentiality: patients' fitness to drive and reporting concerns to DVLA or DVA](#); 4. Farnan A., O'Neil D., & Melville C (2019) [What should I do if my patient is unfit to drive?](#); 5. DVLA contact <https://live.email-dvla.service.gov.uk/> Tel 0300 7906806