

Driving

Everything you need to know about driving
if you have macular disease.

This leaflet is available on audio CD.

You don't have to face macular disease alone.
For the best information and support call us on
0300 3030 111.

Having macular degeneration does not automatically mean you have to stop driving. Many people still meet the legal requirements and can continue to drive safely and legally.

However, if your eye specialist says you have a sight condition in both eyes which cannot be corrected with prescription glasses, you have a legal duty to inform your driving licence authority.

You should also inform your car insurance provider. This is the case even if you feel your sight is still good.

There is a list of licensing authorities at the end of this leaflet.

If both eyes are affected, it is your responsibility to report your eye condition. If you don't do so you will be breaking the law.

Assessing your vision

When you contact the licensing authority you will be sent a questionnaire about your vision. You may also be asked for permission for your GP to pass on information about your sight. You may be asked to see an

eye specialist for sight tests. There are several types of test.

A visual acuity test measures the sharpness of your vision. To be able to drive a private car or motorbike you must have binocular visual acuity of at least 6/12. This means that when you use both eyes together, with glasses or contact lenses if necessary, you can see at 6 metres what a person with normal vision can see at 12 metres.

A visual field test measures your range of vision to the sides. You must have a visual field

of at least 120° with at least 50° to left and right. Drivers with macular degeneration, who lose central vision, often pass this test.

The number plate test checks whether you can read a standard car number plate, in good daylight, wearing any prescription spectacles, from 20 metres. This test indicates visual acuity but is not an accurate test. You can try it by walking 25 paces away from a parked car – one picked at random, not one you know – and see if you can read the number plate.

Based on the results, the driving authority will decide if it is safe for you to drive. If you do not meet the required standard you cannot drive on a public road. If you do you will be guilty of a serious offence. You may also invalidate your insurance.

In degenerative conditions, such as macular degeneration, your vision will be rechecked every 12 to 24 months. If you feel your sight has worsened and you're not sure if it's affecting your ability to drive, seek advice from your GP, optician or eye specialist.

Planning ahead

If it seems you may need to stop driving in the future, it is better to take control and plan ahead. Investigate local public transport. If you are registered sight impaired there may be travel discounts available. By not running and insuring a car you will be able to spend this money on other forms of transport.

If you are in any doubt as to whether your sight is good enough to drive, seek advice from an optician or ophthalmologist.

Driving abroad

Most European countries conform to the same sight regulations. However, some parts of the world may have different requirements. Before travelling abroad, check if you are still eligible to drive.

Group 2 driving

All the previous information relates to driving a private car or motorbike. There are much more stringent requirements for group 2 drivers – those who drive larger or passenger-carrying vehicles. Contact the

relevant driving authority for further information.

Mobility scooters

The laws regarding their use are not currently clearly defined. However, they are under review. Currently the DVLA strongly advises that users should:

- have a minimum visual acuity of 6/24
- be physically able to control the vehicle
- have third party insurance cover
- receive basic mobility scooter training.

By law, users must not handle a mobility scooter if taking medication that makes them drowsy or if under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If you are in any doubt please consult your GP or optician.

Department of Transport
gov.uk/mobility-scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs-rules

Licence authorities

England, Scotland and Wales

DVLA

Tel: 0300 790 6806

Visit gov.uk/contact-the-dvla

or write to

Drivers Medical
Enquiries, DVLA,
Swansea, SA99 1TU

Northern Ireland DVANI

Tel: 0300 200 7861

Email: dva@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Isle of Man

Vehicle and Driving
Licensing Office

Tel: 01624 686 843

Channel Isles

Guernsey

Tel: 01481 243 400

Jersey

Tel: 01534 4486 00

Email: dvsinfo@gov.je

How we help

Macular disease is the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK, with around 300 people diagnosed every day.

The Macular Society is the only charity determined to beat the fear and isolation of macular disease with world-class research, and the best advice and support.

Our research programme is focused on finding new treatments and a cure to Beat Macular Disease forever. To support people affected by macular disease now,

the Macular Society provides a range of support, information and services:

The Advice and Information Service (0300 3030 111) is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Alternatively, you can email help@macularsociety.org

Our other services include:

- Local Support Groups
- Counselling
- Telephone Befriending
- Treatment Buddies
- Skills for Seeing.

Working with you to Beat Macular Disease:

- We provide the best advice and information on living with macular disease.
- Macular Society Support Groups can help you to beat the isolation of macular disease, by connecting you with other local people who know what you're going through – offering support and companionship.
- Our research programme is focused on finding new treatments and a cure to Beat Macular Disease forever.

Macular Society

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