

Driving

Support throughout central vision loss

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

**No one need face macular degeneration alone.
For information and support call 0300 3030 111.**

Being able to drive is very important to many people as it helps maintain independence.

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. 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 will 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.

One measures the sharpness of your vision (visual acuity). 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.

Another test measures your range of vision to the sides (visual field). 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.

Occasionally you may be asked to do the number plate test. This checks whether you can read a standard car number plate, in good light, wearing any prescription spectacles, from about 20 metres. This test only indicates your visual acuity and is not an accurate test.

(Try this yourself at home: walk 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.

In degenerative conditions, such as macular degeneration, your vision will be rechecked every 12–24 months.

If you feel your sight has got worse and you're not sure if it's affecting your ability to drive, get 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 eventually registered sight impaired there may be travel discounts available. By using public transport, taxis or Link buses for instance, you will save

on the cost of running and insuring a car.

The golden rule

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 above 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

Mobility scooters are becoming more popular. It is essential that users are able to keep themselves and

others safe. The laws regarding their use are not clearly defined at the moment and are more advisory than definite rules.

However, they are under review and likely to become more strict in future. 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 use 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.

Licence authorities

England, Scotland and Wales

DVLA

Tel: 0300 790 6806

Email:

eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

or write to Drivers
Medical Group, DVLA,
Swansea SA99 1TU

Northern Ireland

DVLNI

Tel: 0845 402 4000

Email:

dvlni@doeni.gov.uk

Republic of Ireland

Road Safety Authority

Tel: 01890 40 60 40

Email: info@rsa.ie

Isle of Man

IOM Licensing Dept

Tel: 01624 686 741 or
686 836

Channel Isles

Central Licensing
Agency

Tel: 01534 811 811

Useful Contacts

Department of
Transport (for mobility
scooter information)

Tel: 020 7944 2046

Macular Society

Helpline:

0300 3030 111

Email: [help@](mailto:help@macularsociety.org)

macularsociety.org

If you've found this leaflet useful please consider making a donation to support our work.

**Macular Society**

Support throughout central vision loss

Macular Society

PO Box 1870

Andover

SP10 9AD

01264 350 551

www.macularsociety.org

info@macularsociety.org

Registered Charity Number 1001198.
SC042015 in Scotland. Macular Society is the
trading name of the Macular Disease Society.
© Macular Society 2013. MS005