



The Facts is a new regular feature. In each issue, we'll look at one of the most common queries received by the SAMH Information Service.

Q. I have been told that because I have been diagnosed with depression, my driving licence must be revoked. Is this true?

A. There are medical standards of fitness which drivers must meet. The standards are higher for drivers of lorries and buses – in this answer, we only deal with the requirements to drive cars (including taxis) or motorbikes.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) says that you must inform them of any new or altered medical condition which may affect safe driving. Its Medical Practitioners' Guide to the Current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive gives details of mental health problems and associated requirements for driving. It says that if you have anxiety or depression, but do not experience "significant memory or concentration problems, agitation, behavioural disturbance or suicidal thoughts", then you can continue to drive. If you do experience these problems, then you will normally have to stop driving until one of the DVLA's medical advisers has decided whether you are fit to drive.

If this happens, you will be asked to fill in a medical questionnaire, and to give permission for the adviser to get information about your condition from your doctor if necessary. You may also be asked to take a driving assessment, eye test or driving test, or to undergo a medical examination.

The inquiry can decide that:

- you can keep your current licence;
- you can be issued for a licence for one, two or three years; or
- your licence must be revoked.

If your licence is revoked, you can appeal against this decision. The DVLA should give you details of how to do this.

If you are found unfit to drive because of anxiety or depression, you will need to be “well and stable” for a period of 6 months in order to resume driving. You must not be experiencing any side-effects of medication that would interfere with your alertness or concentration. The DVLA says that drivers who experience depression or anxiety for long periods can continue to drive if they are “symptom-free on doses of psychiatric medication which do not

You should be aware that if your driving is affected by your medication and you are stopped by the police, the Road Traffic Act does not differentiate between legal and prescribed drugs. So you could be convicted of an offence if your driving is impaired through prescribed medication. This in turn could affect your insurance costs. If you have an accident while on medication which you have not declared to the insurance company, it might void your policy.

In our experience, some people who notify the DVLA about their depression are told that they

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impair”. However, the DVLA can request a psychiatric report.

The DVLA says that anyone experiencing acute psychosis or mania must not drive during that period. To get your licence back after experiencing psychosis, you must:

- Be “well and stable” for at least 3 months
- Be “compliant with treatment”
- Not be experiencing any adverse effects from medication which might affect driving.

In these cases the DVLA will also require approval from an appropriate medical specialist before giving back your licence.

If your GP advises that you should stop driving and you do not, the GP is permitted to notify the DVLA. He or she should tell you that they have done this.

can continue to drive, while others have to undergo an assessment. It depends entirely on whether your depression or medication has an effect on your driving. Your GP should be able to advise you on what to do.

You can download the DVLA Guidelines, as well as its Customer Service Guide for Drivers with Medical Conditions, from www.dvla.gov.uk. You can also contact the DVLA on: 0870 240 0009 or on their textphone for deaf and hard of hearing people on: 01792 766 366.

Do you have a question about mental health? You can contact the SAMH Information Service between 2pm-4.30pm every weekday. Call: 0141 568 7000 or email: info@samh.org.uk.

The Information Service cannot provide advice or counselling.