



Glaucoma  
UK

[glaucoma.uk](http://glaucoma.uk)

# Glaucoma and driving



# Glaucoma UK is a registered charity that is here for everyone living with glaucoma throughout the UK.

- We raise awareness of glaucoma so that it is detected and treated early.
- We campaign for effective services for everyone affected by glaucoma.
- We provide advice and support to help people live well with glaucoma.
- We fund vital glaucoma research.



## **Campaigning & Awareness**

Fewer people go blind



## **Advice & Support**

People with glaucoma live well and stay well



## **Research**

Better diagnosis, care and treatment

## What is Glaucoma?

**Glaucoma is the name of a group of eye diseases in which the optic nerve becomes damaged, usually as a result of increased pressure in the eye. The optic nerve sends visual information from the eye to the brain and if it is damaged, it can result in sight loss and even blindness.**

The most common type of glaucoma (primary open angle glaucoma) starts very slowly and has no symptoms to begin with, so it is usually discovered during an eye health check by an optometrist. If glaucoma is detected early and treatment is started and continued, significant sight loss is unlikely. However, you cannot get back any vision that has already been lost due to glaucoma.

There are three main types of glaucoma: primary, secondary, and developmental (glaucoma in babies and children).

## Driving with glaucoma

**Driving is important to maintain freedom and independence but for your safety and the safety of others, you do need a good standard of vision to ensure that you can see well enough to be safe on the roads.**

Glaucoma damages the peripheral (off-centre) parts of your field of vision first and does not usually affect your central detailed vision until the late stages of the condition. This peripheral damage can go unnoticed, partly because you use your central vision most of the time and partly because one eye can compensate for the other if the damage is in a different area in your other eye. When you are driving, the danger comes when the damaged areas on each of your eyes overlap. Instead of an accurate combined visual picture, your brain fills in the parts that your damaged visual field is missing..

The gradual onset and adaptation to your loss of vision means there is no awareness of these blind areas, which could lead to serious events while you

are driving

The minimum visual standards for driving depend on the type of licence in question.

**This leaflet is for car or motorcycle licence holders.** For commercial drivers, the standards are higher.

## Do I need to tell the DVLA?

### Glaucoma in one eye

If you have glaucoma in just one eye, you only need to tell the DVLA if you're a commercial (group two) driver.

Group one drivers with glaucoma in one eye and normal vision in the other don't need to let the DVLA know.

Group one drivers with glaucoma in one eye and ocular hypertension in the other also don't need to inform the DVLA.

### Glaucoma in both eyes

All drivers who have glaucoma in both eyes must inform the DVLA.

## Monocular vision

If you only have sight in one eye you still need to meet the expected visual acuity and visual field test standards as someone with vision in both eyes. If there is complete loss of vision in one of your eyes (for car drivers this means light cannot be seen at all) then you must tell the DVLA. You will only be allowed to carry on driving once you have been advised by a clinical advisor that you meet the standards expected to carry on driving safely.

## DVLA test requirements

The two standards which are used to assess a driver's safety are visual acuity and visual field.

When you tell the DVLA they will require further details about the vision and may arrange for you to have a vision test at an approved centre. As of 2020, these tests are done at a local Specsavers optician.

Your visual field test and the visual acuity test must be carried out by a qualified and trained operator, in a quiet location, free from distraction and in a well-lit room.

## Visual acuity

When you do the visual acuity test you will be asked to do this with both eyes open and with or without glasses or contact lenses. You must have a visual acuity of at least 6/12 and be able to read a standard car number plate at 20 metres. A visual acuity of 6/12 means seeing at six metres what someone with normal vision can see at 12 metres distance.

## Visual field

As a driver you should have good peripheral (off-centre) vision on both sides and no significant defect in the central vision.

The test will be performed with both eyes together and will be different from the test usually performed by optometrists or hospital eye departments. Sometimes the frames of glasses can interfere with your peripheral vision so take the advice of the testing technician as to whether glasses should be worn for the test or not.

Your test results are sent to the DVLA and they decide whether the standard

has been met or not You are entitled to a copy of your visual field test results at the time of your appointment. If the eye centre is unable to supply you with one you can request a copy from the DVLA.

The DVLA guidance states the need for the driver to have a binocular horizontal field of vision of 120 degrees minimum with not less than 50 degrees on each side of the centre and no significant field defect either within or encroaching 20 degrees from the centre.

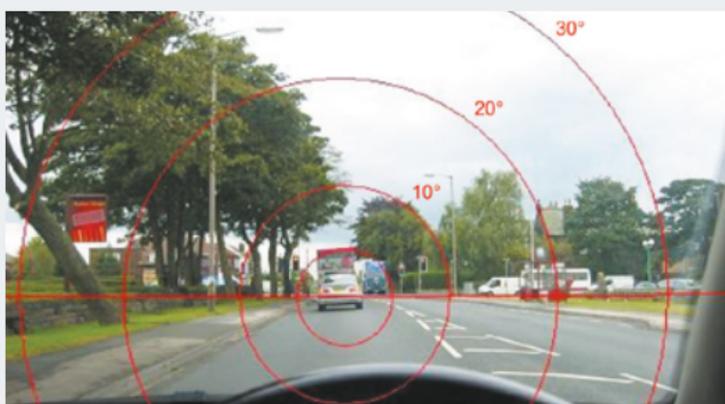


Illustration showing five, 10, 20 and 30 degrees from the centre

The DVLA can only make a decision based on accurate visual field charts. You can take up to three visual field tests at your appointment if the first or second charts do not comply with accuracy standards.

DVLA may issue a restricted driving licence valid for one, two, three or five years, depending on your field of vision.

## Right to appeal

### Informal appeal

If you receive a letter from the DVLA withholding (not re-issuing) or revoking (taking away) your driving licence, this will include information regarding your right to appeal and advice on the process.

If your visual field test does not meet the required standard, it is possible to seek a second opinion from an independent optometrist, and have a further visual field test which you will have to pay for.. (The initial test is paid for by the DVLA.) The DVLA will consider the best test result.

If the independent optometrist test suggest your vision might pass the required standard, the DVLA will allow you to re-apply and will send you for a further test at an approved optician (Specsavers). If you have any other additional medical information that was not available when a decision was made, DVLA invite customers to submit the additional information and a dedicated team will review it promptly.

The additional information should be sent to: **DM Business Support, D7, DVLA, SA99 1ZZ**. Please remember to quote the DVLA reference number at the top of the letter.

### **Formal appeal**

A formal appeal to the Magistrates Court of England or Wales, or a Sheriff Court in Scotland, is also available. The time limit varies. If lodging an appeal in England or Wales, this needs to be done within six months of revocation. The time limit in Scotland is different. A driver must bring the appeal against revocation within three weeks of the decision being made. It is vital that

drivers in Scotland use the correct postal address and that they send the information promptly to: **DM Business Support, D7, DVLA, SA99 1ZZ.**

There is a team who will prioritise such cases and will process and respond immediately. Before deciding to formally appeal, do feel free to discuss with your eye specialist or GP to confirm whether or not you have a valid case because if you lose your appeal you may have to bear the costs involved.

## **Your responsibilities**

### **Driving insurance**

You must inform your insurance company that you have glaucoma in each eye, otherwise your insurance may no longer be valid. If the DVLA allow you to keep driving, the insurance company will not refuse to provide cover, and your premium should not be affected.

### **Responsibilities**

As a driver, it is your legal responsibility to inform the DVLA of any medical

condition which might affect your ability to drive. However, the medical profession also has a responsibility and should take action to inform the DVLA if they know that someone who may not meet the required standards continues to drive.

## Contact details for the DVLA

**Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency Drivers Customer Services, Correspondence Team, DVLA, Swansea, SA6 7JL**

**Car or motorcycle licence call:  
0300 79 06 806**

**Bus, coach or lorry licence call:  
0300 79 06 807**

**Email:  
[glaucomaqueries@dvla.gov.uk](mailto:glaucomaqueries@dvla.gov.uk)**

**Website:  
[www.gov.uk/glaucoma-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/glaucoma-and-driving)**

For information about the standards for other types of licence, please contact the DVLA directly or all regulations can be viewed on the DVLA website in a publication called “Assessing fitness to drive - a guide for medical professionals”.

To notify the DVLA, visit their website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/real-condition>

Please note, this online form is only suitable to use if you have a single medical condition. If you have more than one condition which may affect your ability to drive, contact the DVLA directly and they will send you the appropriate forms.

## Remember

- If you have glaucoma in both eyes, you must inform the DVLA.
- The vast majority of people diagnosed with glaucoma today will not go blind or lose their driving licence, provided they follow the treatment prescribed by their glaucoma specialist, and attend their appointments.

This free leaflet is brought to you by **Glaucoma UK** (formerly the International Glaucoma Association). Contact Glaucoma UK for further information or advice:

**Glaucoma helpline:** 01233 64 81 70

Monday-Friday 9.30am-5.00pm

**Email:** [helpline@glaucoma.uk](mailto:helpline@glaucoma.uk)

**glaucoma.uk**

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The information in this leaflet was correct at time of printing (printing date 06/2020)

A list of references is available upon request

Whilst every step has been taken to compile accurate information and to keep it up to date, we cannot guarantee its correctness and completeness.

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