Glaucoma UK

Driving and glaucoma

Glaucoma UK helpline

If you have questions about anything to do with glaucoma, contact our helpline on:

01233 648 170

Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5.00pm

Calls are charged at your standard network cost.

Other ways to find out more

Email: **helpline@glaucoma.uk**

Visit our website: **glaucoma.uk**

Help us keep our services free

Glaucoma UK is the only UK charity providing support exclusively to people living with glaucoma. Everyone who needs help and information about glaucoma should be able to get it for free. That's why there's no charge for our booklets and services. We rely on donations, and every contribution truly matters.

If you'd like to contribute to the cost of this booklet or help fund our services, please go to **www.glaucoma.uk/donate** or call **01233 648 164**. We really could not continue without our amazing supporters. Thank you.

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Summary

Driving is important to many people, and you need to be safe on the roads.

You must tell the DVLA (in England, Scotland or Wales) or the DVA (in Northern Ireland) if:

- you drive a car or motorcycle, and you have glaucoma in both eyes;
- you have glaucoma in one eye and another eye condition in the other eye;
- you drive a bus, coach or lorry, and you have glaucoma in one or both eyes.

The DVLA or DVA will ask you to take a special visual field test at a high street optician. This test checks you meet the minimum vision standards for driving.

Most people with glaucoma meet the minimum vision standards for driving.

You should also check with your motor insurer whether you need to tell them about glaucoma.

How might glaucoma affect driving?

Glaucoma affects your vision in ways that could cause an accident when you're driving.

Glaucoma is a common group of eye diseases where your optic nerve has become damaged. Your optic nerve connects your eye to your brain, so damage to this nerve affects your vision.

Glaucoma usually develops slowly. Most people with glaucoma meet the minimum vision standards for driving.

Glaucoma affects everyone differently. People who notice glaucoma vision loss often describe blurry, misty or blank patches in their vision.

Vision loss from glaucoma usually starts in your peripheral (off-centre) vision. You use peripheral vision for driving, walking around and seeing things at the edge of your vision.

Central vision is usually clear for much longer. You use central vision for detailed tasks like reading, watching TV and looking at faces.

Your two eyes work together. If you have a gap in your vision in one eye, your other eye might make up for it.

If you have vision loss in the same place in both eyes, there's a gap. Your brain is missing information about what's there. Your brain tries to fill in gaps based on everything else you see.

This could lead to an accident while you're driving. You may think that the road is clear when there's a person, vehicle or other obstacle where you cannot see.

full vision
THE SALT RO

moderate glaucoma
THE SALT

advanced glaucoma

You need to decide whether or not you feel safe and want to keep driving.

If you still want to drive, you must report your glaucoma and take a vision test to make sure you meet vision standards. Doing this may make you feel anxious.

Our helpline is there for you to talk through how you're feeling as well as the practical side of things.

01233 648 170

Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5.00pm

helpline@glaucoma.uk

Who do I need to tell about glaucoma?

You may need to report your glaucoma to:

- the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) if you live in England, Wales or Scotland;
- the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) if you live in Northern Ireland;
- your motor insurance company.

Whether you need to report your glaucoma to the DVLA or DVA depends on:

- the type of driving licence you have;
- whether you have glaucoma in one or both eyes.

Your motor insurance policy tells you what medical conditions you need to tell the insurance company about. If you fail to tell them about one of these conditions, your insurance might be invalid.

Most people need to tell their motor insurance company about glaucoma. If you are unsure, contact your insurance company.

Car or motorcycle (group 1) drivers

If you drive a car or motorcycle, tell the DVLA or DVA if:

- you have glaucoma in both eyes;
- you have glaucoma in one eye and poor vision in the other eye;
- you have glaucoma in one eye and another eye condition in the other eye.

You can keep driving without telling the DVLA or DVA if you have glaucoma in just one eye and good vision in the other. This is the case even if you have raised eye pressure without damage to your optic nerve (ocular hypertension) in the other eye.

Bus, coach or lorry (group 2) drivers

If you drive a bus, coach or lorry, tell the DVLA or DVA if you have glaucoma in one eye or both.

Can I wait until an eyecare professional tells me to contact the DVLA or DVA?

No. As a driver it is your responsibility to report any medical condition that may affect your ability to drive safely.

You must tell the DVLA or DVA about glaucoma even if:

- you think your vision is fine;
- your eyecare professional has not talked to you about driving.

If you fail to tell the DVLA or DVA, you may:

- be fined up to £1,000;
- invalidate your motor insurance.

If you refuse to report your glaucoma, eyecare professionals may report it if they believe you're putting yourself or others at risk by driving.

How do I tell the DVLA or DVA?

How you report glaucoma depends which part of the UK you live in and what sort of driving licence you have.

In England, Scotland or Wales

If you drive a car or motorcycle (you have a group 1 licence):

- go to **www.gov.uk/eye-conditions-and-driving** to report your glaucoma online or download and print a V1 form;
- phone the DVLA on **0300 790 6806** to ask for a paper copy of the V1 form.

If you drive a bus, coach or lorry (you have a group 2 licence):

- go to **www.gov.uk/eye-conditions-and-driving/bus-coach-lorry** to download and print a V1V form;
- phone the DVLA on **0300 790 6807** to ask for a paper copy of the V1V form.

In Northern Ireland

Ask the DVA to send you the form for reporting glaucoma using any of the options below:

- **0300 200 7861**
- **dva@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk**
- Driver and Vehicle Agency, County Hall, Castlerock Road, Waterside, Coleraine, BT51 3HS

To make sure the DVA sends you the right form, tell them:

- whether you have a group 1 (car and motorcycle) or group 2 (bus, coach and lorry) licence;
- that you need to report glaucoma.

What happens when I tell the DVLA or DVA?

When you tell the DVLA or DVA about your glaucoma, they'll need more information.

They'll write to you, asking you to book a vision test at a high street optician. The DVLA or DVA pays for this test, so it's free to you.

- In England, Wales or Scotland, the DVLA will usually give you a choice of four branches of Specsavers.
- In Northern Ireland, you can choose any high street optician that offers the test.

The DVLA or DVA may also write to your eye doctor or GP to ask for information.

The DVLA or DVA use your test results and other information to check you meet the vision standards for driving.

What are the vision standards for driving?

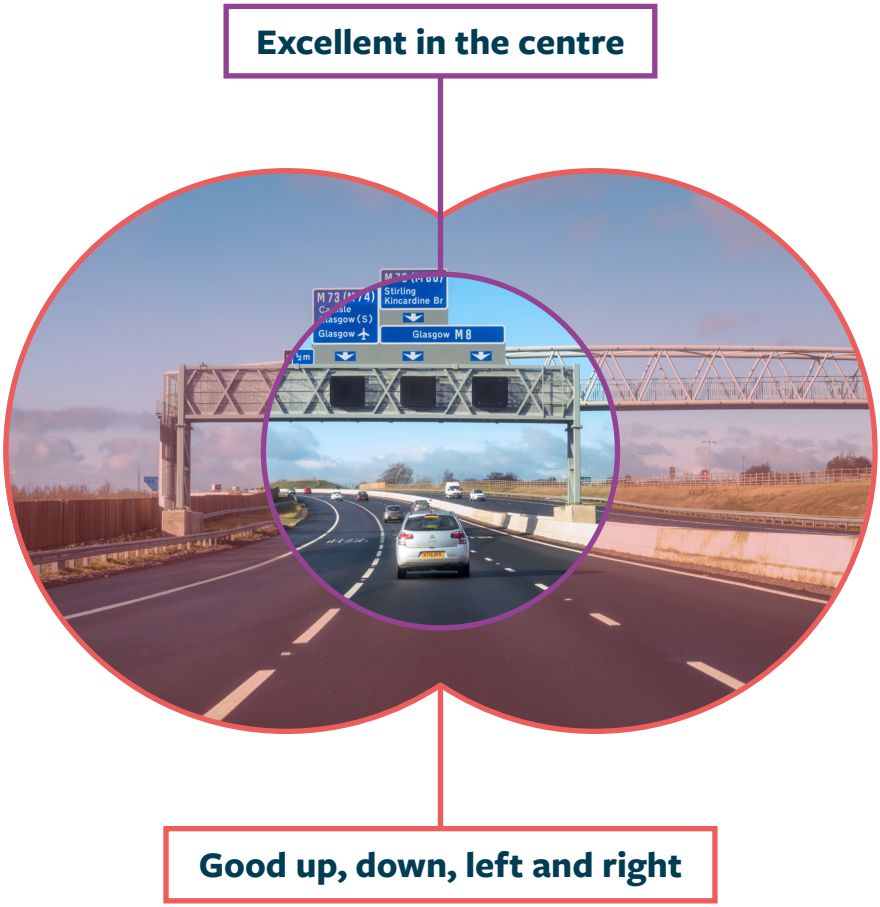
All drivers must meet minimum standards set by the government for visual acuity and visual field.

Visual acuity is how well you see detail at a distance. If you drive a car or motorcycle:

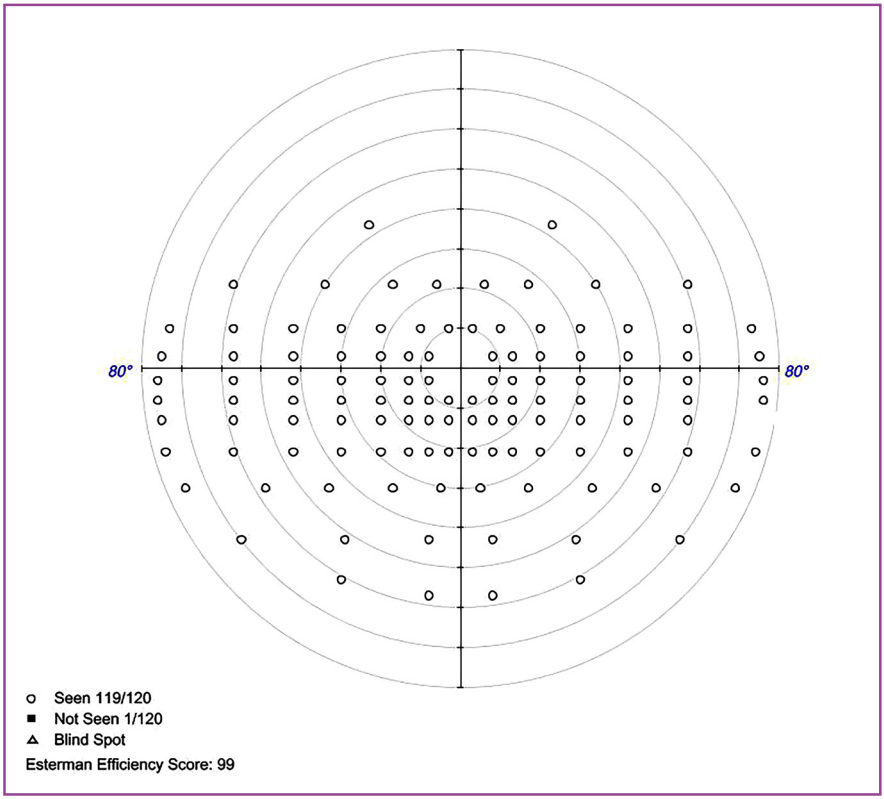
- You must be able to read a car numberplate 20 metres (about 65 feet) away.
- You must also be able to read a particular line of text from a letter chart during an eye test. This line is sometimes called the 6/12 line. In practice this means you can see 6 metres (about 20 feet) away what someone with 'normal' vision can see 12 metres (about 40 feet) away.

If you drive a bus, coach or lorry, you must meet higher standards for both visual acuity and visual field.

Visual field is how well you see things straight ahead, up, down, left and right. If you drive a car or motorcycle, your visual field must be:



The standards for visual field are complex. If you have any significant visual field loss in the same place in both eyes, you may not meet the standards.



▲ **An example of results from a visual field test for driving (Esterman) meeting the minimum vision standards for driving. This tests both eyes working together.**

What tests will I have?

When you go for your vision test appointment, an optometrist will test your visual acuity and visual field.

An optometrist is an eyecare professional trained to check eye health and measure vision.

You do the tests with both eyes open and working together.

If you wear glasses or contact lenses when driving, you should wear them for the tests.

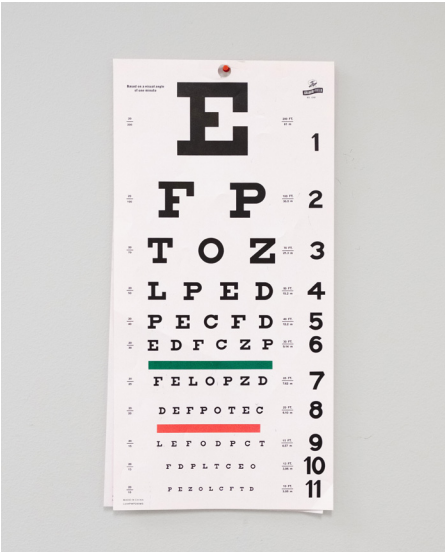
The optometrist should be able to give you a copy of your test results. If they cannot, you can ask the DVLA or DVA for a copy.

Only the DVLA or DVA can tell you if you meet the vision standards for driving and can keep your driving licence.

However, the optometrist may tell you if they think you do not meet the vision standards for driving.

Visual acuity test

The optometrist will ask you to read letters from a chart, card or screen.



Visual field test

There are different kinds of visual field test.

The visual field test you are most likely to do is called an Esterman test. The Esterman test is different to the visual field test done at a routine eye test or eye clinic appointment.

The Esterman test:

- measures a wider area of your visual field;
- tests both eyes working together;
- uses lights that stay the same brightness.

▲ **Visual field test machine**

The optometrist will ask you to:

- sit at a visual field test machine;
- look at a fixed point;
- press a button every time you see a light.

If your optometrist agrees, you can do the visual field test up to three times at your appointment.

If you wear glasses and the frame gets in the way, you may be able to repeat the visual field test without your glasses.

Tell the optometrist or their assistant if you find the test hard. For example:

- you're distracted;
- you keep pressing the button when there's no light;
- you do not understand what to do.

If you find the test hard or you're distracted, your reactions might be inconsistent. For example, when a light is in the same place, you might sometimes press the button and sometimes not. The machine checks for this and will tell the optometrist that you might be struggling.

If you found the test hard to do, the DVLA or DVA will see this when they get your results. They might invite you to do a different type of test, called a Goldmann test, at a high street optician or eye clinic.

What happens after the vision tests?

The optometrist sends the results to the DVLA or DVA.

The DVLA or DVA decides whether you meet the vision standards for driving. The DVLA or DVA will write to you to tell you their decision.

If you meet the vision standards, the DVLA or DVA will give you a licence for one, two, three or five years. The length of the licence depends on your age and your vision test results. For example, if you only just meet the vision standards, they may give you a licence for just one year.

What happens when my licence expires?

When your licence expires, you need to apply to renew your licence.

The DVLA or DVA will send you a reminder 90 days before your licence expires. If you do not get this reminder, you should contact the DVLA or DVA.

Usually, the DVLA or DVA asks you to go for another vision test. Sometimes they just ask you to tell them whether your vision has changed. They may also contact your eye doctor or GP for information.

If you still meet the vision standards, the DVLA or DVA will give you another licence.

Can I drive while I'm waiting to hear from the DVLA or DVA?

You may have to wait weeks or even months to get a decision from the DVLA or DVA.

While you wait to hear, you can drive as long as all of the following apply to you:

- the DVLA or DVA has your application;
- you sent the DVLA or DVA your application within the last 12 months;
- you feel you are safe to drive;
- you have not been told by a healthcare professional to stop driving.

If your licence expires while you wait:

- in the UK you can keep driving;
- abroad you should check with the country you're driving in.

What if I disagree with the decision from the DVLA or DVA?

If you disagree with the decision from the DVLA or DVA, you can challenge it.

The letter from the DVLA or DVA will tell you how and when to challenge the decision.

There are two types of challenge:

1. informal challenge to the DVLA or DVA;

2. formal appeals to a court.

You must stop driving while you appeal.

Informal challenge to the DVLA or DVA

An informal challenge is when you ask the DVLA or DVA to look again at their decision. You need to prove that your vision meets the visual standards.

There are two main ways you can do this.

- Get a second opinion at a high street optician. You'll have to take and pay for another vision test.
- Send the DVLA or DVA new medical evidence, such as other test results or hospital letters.

When you send new information to the DVLA or DVA, always include your reference number. Your reference number is on all letters from the DVLA or DVA.

In England, Wales or Scotland, send new information to:

DM Further Evidence, DMI Support, D5, DVLA, SA99 1DL

In Northern Ireland, send new evidence to:

Driver and Vehicle Agency, County Hall, Castlerock Road, Waterside, Coleraine, BT51 3HS

The letter from the DVLA or DVA will tell you how and when you can send new evidence. There are no strict time limits, but you should send new evidence as soon as you can.

If the DVLA or DVA agree that the new information suggests you meet the vision standards, they'll usually send you for another vision test.

Formal appeals

A formal appeal is when you ask a court to look at the decision from the DVLA or DVA. The court is:

- a magistrates court in England, Wales or Northern Ireland;
- the sheriffs court in Scotland.

There are strict time limits on making a formal appeal. You must start your formal appeal

- in England and Wales within 6 months;
- in Northern Ireland within 3 months;
- in Scotland within 3 weeks.

If you lose the appeal, you'll have to pay for it. Only make a formal appeal if your eye doctor or optometrist believe you meet the minimum vision standards for driving.

Will my motor insurance premium go up when I report glaucoma?

Your insurance company should provide cover and keep your premium the same as long as:

- you tell the DVLA or DVA about your glaucoma;
- the DVLA or DVA allows you to keep driving;
- you tell your motor insurance company about any medical conditions that your policy says you must.

What if I choose to stop driving?

Even if the DVLA or DVA would let you keep your licence, you may choose to stop driving.

If you choose to stop driving, you should give up your license. The DVLA and DVA call giving up your licence 'voluntary surrender'.

In England, Wales or Scotland, fill in a Declaration of Voluntary Surrender form. You can:

- go to **www.gov.uk/government/publications/declaration-of-voluntary-surrender** to download the form;
- phone **0300 790 6806** to ask for the form if you have a car or motorcycle (group 1) licence;
- phone **0300 790 6807** to ask for the form if you have a coach, bus or lorry (group 2) licence.

Send the completed declaration of voluntary surrender form with your licence to Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Drivers Customer Services, Correspondence Team, DVLA, Swansea, SA6 7JL.

In Northern Ireland, send both parts of your licence and a covering letter to Medical Section, Driver Licensing Division, Castlerock Road, Waterside, Coleraine, BT51 3TB

In your letter, say that you want to surrender your licence because of glaucoma. Remember to include your reference number. You'll find your reference number on any letter from the DVA.

How do I stay independent if I have to stop driving?

Whether you have to stop driving or choose to stop driving, you need to find other ways to get out and about.

Depending on where you live, how much vision loss you have and how old you are, you may be able to get:

- a disabled person's or older person's concessionary bus pass;
- a disabled person's or older person's railcard;
- help with taxi fares;
- access to volunteer or community transport schemes.

To find out what's available in your area contact:

- your local authority;
- a local organisation for people with vision loss;
- our helpline.

Thinking about the possibility of stopping driving now or in the future may be upsetting or make you anxious.

Our helpline is there for you to talk through how you're feeling as well as the practical side of things.

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helpline@glaucoma.uk

Further help and information from Glaucoma UK

We offer other free information booklets on a range of topics, including:

- **Different types of glaucoma**
- **Treatments such as eye drops, laser treatments and surgery**

For a full list of available booklets and to order or download them, visit our website or contact our helpline.

As well as our information booklets, helpline and website, there are lots of other ways we can help you to live well with glaucoma.

Some examples of our services are:

- **Glaucoma support groups**
  Find out more about glaucoma, share information, and ask questions. Visit our website or call our helpline to see if there's a group near you and to find out about online groups.

- **Health Unlocked**
  Join our online forum and talk to other people with glaucoma. Visit **healthunlocked.com/glaucoma-uk** to get involved.

For more information, to get involved or to give us feedback contact our helpline, visit **www.glaucoma.uk/more** or scan the QR code.

About Glaucoma UK

Glaucoma UK is the charity for people with glaucoma. We raise awareness of the risks of glaucoma, and offer help and support to people living with the disease.

We fund high-quality research into prevention, diagnosis, treatment and, hopefully one day, a cure. We also work with professionals to influence policy and practice with the goal of improving services. Our aim is to end preventable glaucoma vision loss.

Raising awareness

Helping people understand why they may be at risk of glaucoma.

Providing support

Ensuring people can access reliable help and advice when and how they need it.

Influencing policy and professional practice

Advocating for glaucoma patients with those who develop policy, commission services and deliver care.

Supporting research and development

Funding high-quality research into glaucoma prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure.

Keep in touch

We'd love to keep in touch.

Visit our website to sign up for our email newsletter to hear more about our work and how we can help you.

Join Glaucoma UK

Join Glaucoma UK and become a member of our supportive glaucoma community.

You'll receive exclusive benefits, including our magazine full of news and information about glaucoma.

Find out more at **www.glaucoma.uk/membership** or call **01233 648 164**.

Disclaimer

The information in this booklet was correct at the time of last review and is intended as a general guide only. Always ask an eyecare professional or doctor for advice specific to you.

A list of sources is available on request.

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Glaucoma UK is the operating name of the International Glaucoma Association. Charity registered in England and Wales No. 274681 and Scotland No. SC041550