

Important changes to driving regulations

The Department for Transport for the UK is bringing forward the implementation of a European Commission Directive on driving regulations, for people with diabetes, to autumn 2011 (Drivers Medical Group, 2011). This change in the regulations may have far-reaching consequences for healthcare professionals, who see themselves as advocates of the person with diabetes, but also have a duty to the wider road-using public.

Three important changes are being implemented:

- Any driver either on insulin or a sulphonylurea, who has had more than one severe episode of hypoglycaemia (not measured, but requiring third-party assistance) in the preceding 12 months must inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and is at risk of losing their licence.
- Any driver with loss of awareness of hypoglycaemia must inform the DVLA, and is in danger of losing their licence whether they test their blood glucose levels regularly or not.
- People on insulin can apply for a Group 2 (larger goods vehicle [LGV],

passenger carrying vehicles [PCV]) licence if they have had no hypoglycaemic episodes in the past year, have hypoglycaemic awareness and test their blood glucose levels regularly. They must be reviewed at least annually by a consultant diabetologist who will confirm their appropriateness to hold this Group 2 licence. *Box 1* lists the specific conditions that a person with diabetes must meet in order to apply for, or keep, a Group 2 licence.

Thoughtful consideration will be needed before sanctioning an individual treated with insulin to drive an LGV or PCV, but GPs are already receiving such applications. It is the driver's obligation to report to the DVLA any issues with their diabetes, but sometimes healthcare professionals may have to do this in the public interest. We know from ambulance data that many people decline to have information about hypoglycaemic episodes passed to their GP, and this may make that situation worse unless it becomes an obligation on all healthcare personnel to report hypoglycaemic episodes requiring third party assistance. ■



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Drivers Medical Group (2011)
For Medical Practitioners. At A Glance Guide to the Current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive. DVLA, Swansea. Available at: <http://bit.ly/nso0Ti> (accessed 03.10.11)

Box 1. A guide for drivers with insulin-treated diabetes who wish to apply for a Group 2 (LGV/PCV) licence: conditions that must be met (Drivers Medical Group, 2011).

- No episode of hypoglycaemia requiring the assistance of another person has occurred in the preceding 12 months.
- Must have full hypoglycaemic awareness.
- Must demonstrate an understanding of the risks of hypoglycaemia.
- Will not be able to apply until their condition has been stable for a period of at least 1 month.
- Must regularly monitor their condition by checking their blood glucose levels at least twice daily and at times relevant to driving. A glucose meter with a memory function to measure and record blood glucose levels must be used.
- DVLA will arrange an examination by an independent hospital consultant who specialises in the treatment of diabetes every 12 months. At the examination, the consultant will require sight of their blood glucose records for the previous 3 months.
- Must have no other condition which would render them a danger when driving Group 2 vehicles.
- Will be required to sign an undertaking to comply with the directions of doctors treating the diabetes and to report immediately to the DVLA any significant change in their condition.

DVLA=Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency; LGV=larger goods vehicle; PCV=passenger carrying vehicle.

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