

## DRIVING & Brain Injury

**Driving following a brain injury can be a great challenge and wonderful goal to aim towards. By learning to drive again you can gain independence, be self reliant and just simply be mobile within your own community.**

Following a brain injury there are a number of things that can interfere with your ability to learn to drive. Cognitive, physical and perception issues can make relearning driving difficult including:

- Fatigue
- Poor concentration
- Impulsiveness and poor self control
- Epilepsy or other medical reasons
- Impairment to the senses including loss of sight or hearing
- Poor judgement and decision making
- Auditory and visual space deficits
  
- Difficult to manage busy traffic
- Inability to react as quickly in an emergency as you did before your brain injury
- Problems positioning the car correctly on the road
- Sometimes not seeing other cars or pedestrians
- Difficulty turning the steering wheel with both hands
- Difficulty operating the brake or accelerator

### **Remember!**

Alcohol will affect you more than before your brain injury.  
Check if your medication affects your driving.  
Tiredness can be a problem that affects driving.

**DO NOT DRINK & DRIVE**

An assessment is essential following a brain injury in regards to skill and safety due to the risk of accidents. In most circumstances it is best to wait to learn to drive until a period of recovery and reassessment has been carried out.

In some cases, an individual with one or more of the issues listed above may still be deemed fit to drive. If you wish to learn to drive following an injury to the brain consult your GP or consultant especially when there is a risk of epilepsy. It may be helpful to get adaptations or modifications to a vehicle if you have sensory and motor impairments.

**Compulsory:** D.501 Medical Report Form

Obtain from your local Motor Taxation Office & complete by General Practitioner (GP).

**First time Driver**

Complete and pass a Driver Theory Test – valid for 2 years.

And obtain Learner Permit (D.201) – local Motor Taxation office

**Driving Assessment**

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) provides a nationwide driving assessment and tuition service for people with disabilities. Prior to receiving tuition all applicants need to be assessed and hold a learner driving permit (previously known as a provisional licence) or full license. The assessments are carried out by occupational therapists and driving instructors. The assessment determines whether the applicant should return to driving and what adaptations (if any) are required. Assessments are carried out in: Carrick on Shannon Clontarf, Clane, Cork, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Mullingar, Manorcunningham and Navan.

**Adapted Vehicles**

For many people adapted vehicles are required to learn to drive, which can be provided by the IWA. Advice and information is also available. There is a VAT/RT relief scheme for driver or passengers with disabilities along with a motorised transport grant. For information contact the **National Mobility Centre in Clane, Co Kildare** on 045 893 094, email [maats@iwa.ie](mailto:maats@iwa.ie) or visit their website on [www.iwa.ie](http://www.iwa.ie)

### **Residential 3 week intensive training course**

Additionally, the **Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland** (DDAI) offers a residential 3 week intensive training course for any person with a physical disability. The person learns to drive a suitably adapted car and may go on to apply for the driving test. This service, including accommodation and meals are provided free of charge to the learner driver. It is funded by a capitation fee from the Health Service Executive (HSE). For further information contact them on (094) 936 4054/936 4266.

### **Motor Insurance**

Shop around for the best competitive quote and declare you have a brain injury or epilepsy. Failure to declare your injury could mean that in the event of an accident your policy could be null and void. For more information on insurance cover contact the Irish Insurance Federation of Ireland on 01-676 1914 or email [fed@iife.ie](mailto:fed@iife.ie) or visit [www.iif.ie](http://www.iif.ie)

### **What do you need to do if you have had a brain injury and want to drive?**

#### **By law you must:**

- Inform the Irish Driving Licence Authority (motor taxation offices)
- Inform your insurance company you had a brain injury – or you will not be covered
- Stop driving until you have discussed it with your GP.
- If you are learning to drive for the first time you must
  - first declare your are medically fit (GP)
  - then complete and pass a Driver Theory Test, when you will be given a certificate, which you must send with your application for a learner permit. The theory test certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.
- The application form for a learner permit (D.201) is available from your Motor Taxation Office or you can request Form D.201 by post through [www.CitizensInformation.ie](http://www.CitizensInformation.ie) . It is not available to download on line.

You may want to contact the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), who provide Special driving assessments, give lessons and advice on adapting a car to suit you.

## What happens next?

### Tuition & Assessment

IWA has been providing a driving tuition service for drivers with physical disability since the 1960s. Their instructors are experienced and professional, whether you are a total beginner or are returning to driving after acquiring a disability. Prior to receiving tuition, all pupils undergo thorough assessment. Assessments normally take one to two hours and are carried out by Occupational Therapists and Driving Instructors.

### Driver Licenses

In order to avail of the Driving Tuition and Assessment service, people are required to hold at least a learner driving permit (previously known as a provisional license). All first time license applicants are reminded that they are required to complete a theory test. This test is conducted at a nationwide network of 41 different locations. The user-friendly computerised test caters for people with disabilities. All venues for the Theory Test should be wheelchair accessible. For further information on the Theory Test [www.dtts.ie](http://www.dtts.ie)

### Contacts

National Mobility Centre 045 893 094/5  
[maats@iwa.ie](mailto:maats@iwa.ie)

### Tips to make driving safer

To make **driving safer** and more enjoyable some tips may help before getting into a car:

- Ensure you take your medication as prescribed
- Avoid Alcohol as this will impair your ability to drive and interfere with your medication
- Check that the car has enough petrol, water, oil etc to make the journey
- Make sure that you feel you can cope with the distance without feeling tired
- Question whether you feel alert enough to drive or should you consider an alternative form of transport

**References:**

[www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie) (Road Safety Authority)

[www.rotr.ie](http://www.rotr.ie) (Rule of the Road)

[www.citizeninformation.ie](http://www.citizeninformation.ie) – motoring

[www.ddai.ie](http://www.ddai.ie) (Disabled drivers association of Ireland)

[www.iif.ie](http://www.iif.ie) (Irish Insurance Federation)

[www.dtts.ie](http://www.dtts.ie) (Drivers Theory Test)

List of approved instructors is available on the Road Safety Authority Approved Driving Instructor website. They also provide information on learner permits (driving licence)



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