Following brain injury resuming driving is a significant step in a person’s recovery, and most people are keen to return to driving as soon as possible. However there are legal requirements that need to be adhered to. Even minor brain injury may affect a person's ability to drive safely, it may be wise to seek advice from a driving assessment centre.

**Common Problems Experienced Post Brain Injury**

- Reduced concentration and/or attention.
- Difficulty judging distance and speed.
- Slow thinking and reaction times.
- Difficulty thinking ahead and making decisions.
- Difficulty coping in stressful situations.
- Reduced sensation and/or hemiplegia in one or more limb.
- Altered vision.

**Informing the DVLA**

Any injury/illness/condition that may affect your ability to drive safely has to be reported to the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority). This should be done in writing to ‘Drivers Medical Unit’ of the DVLA in Swansea. You should also inform your car insurance company of your condition or your insurance will become invalid. At this point do not return your licence to the DVLA even if you are not able to drive at this time.

On receipt of your letter the DVLA will write to you to gain your permission to approach your General Practitioner (GP) or Hospital Consultant. They will either seek further medical information from your GP or arrange for you to see a Doctor from the DVLA.

Your GP or Hospital Consultant will advise you whether or not you should drive during this time.
The DVLA will make one of the following decisions -

- Your licence may be withdrawn (you will be advised as to when you can reapply).
- You may be asked to take a driving test or attend a mobility centre for an assessment.
- You may be issued with a disability licence.
- Your licence may be valid for a certain length of time, after which the DVLA will review the licence.
- You may keep your licence with no adjustments or further intervention.

If you disagree with the decision, you have the right to appeal.

Driving Assessment Centres

If you are concerned about you or your relative’s ability to drive safely you may request an assessment at a driving assessment centre. This can be done either by your GP or Hospital Consultant or you may refer yourself privately (for a small fee.)

The assessment may include a physical assessment, cognitive assessment, assessment of driving skills on a static rig and the opportunity to drive a suitably adapted car with an experienced driving instructor.

After the assessment you will receive information on –

- Car adaptations that may be suitable and advice where to buy and how to have them fitted to compensate for any physical difficulties e.g. a left foot accelerator pedal can be fitted to an automatic vehicle to enable a person with a right hemiplegia to resume driving.
- Advice on driving with regards to cognitive or visual impairments e.g. poor attention, slow processing of information.
- Your ability to continue driving holding a full or provisional licence.

The driving assessment centre will also be able to give advice and information on -

- Equipment for getting in/out of a vehicle and storage of vehicles.
- Vehicles for people to travel in whilst remaining in their wheelchair.
- Financial advice on purchasing vehicles/adaptations.
- Experienced driving instructors and instructors with adapted vehicles.

**Driving with Epilepsy**

You are not entitled to drive if you have had an epileptic fit within the last year, even if it is a minor one. The DVLA may restrict your driving temporarily even if you have never had a fit, but considered a high risk of developing epilepsy. If you have had fits but these are now well controlled by anticonvulsants you may be able to resume driving after one year. If your medication is changed you should refrain from driving for a short while to allow the new level of medication to settle.

**Useful Addresses**

Drivers Medical Unit  
DVLA  
Swansea  
SA99 1DF  
☎ 0870 6000 301

South Wales Disabled Drivers Assessment Centre.  
Rookwood Hospital  
Fairwater Road  
Llandaff  
Cardiff  
☎ 029 20 313874

**Further Reading**

- Driving After Brain Injury: By Morigue Cornwall, MBE, Published by Headway.
**Useful Information**

- **Exemption From Road Tax:** If you qualify for the higher rate of the Mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) you should not have to pay Road Tax. You do not need to be the driver of the vehicle, providing it is registered in your name (or that of a person appointed to act for you) and is used on your behalf.

- **Buying a Vehicle:** If you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance you are eligible to convert it to Motability. This is then used either to hire or purchase a car through the scheme. For further information contact the Disabled Driving Assessment Centre or apply to:

  Motability  
  Gatehouse  
  West Gate  
  Harlow  
  Essex  
  CM20 1HR  
  ☎ 01279 635 666

- **European Card (Formally Orange Badge Scheme):** This allows you to park close to shops, public buildings etc. You should be able to park in areas that have parking restrictions and you should not be wheel clamped. You may park,

  - At parking meters – without charge or time limit.
  - In streets where otherwise waiting is allowed only for limited periods.
  - Where parking restrictions indicated by yellow lines are in force – for a max of 3 hours in Wales and England and without time limit in Scotland.

*Adapted From: Driving After Brain Injury – By Morigue Cornwall, MBE, Published by Headway*