Each person experiences epilepsy in different ways depending on the type, frequency, severity and predictability of their seizures. A person living with epilepsy or seizures may be eligible to hold a driver licence for private vehicles as long as their seizures are well controlled.

Seizures vary considerably from person to person with many seizure types involving unconsciousness or impairment of consciousness such as tonic-clonic seizures and focal seizures with impaired awareness. A seizure may mean you lose voluntary control of your limbs. This will have an impact on your ability to drive safely.

Recent studies have found that people living with epilepsy are twice as likely to be involved in a motor vehicle crash compared with the general driving population. It has also been found that drivers who are not taking their anti-epileptic medication as prescribed are at an increased risk of experiencing a crash.

Experiencing seizures or having a diagnosis of epilepsy may not mean that you won’t be able to drive at all. It might mean that you have more regular reviews by your doctor or you may be eligible for a conditional licence.

In general, people with well-controlled epilepsy which is demonstrated by an extended seizure-free period may be assessed as fit to drive.

**Assessing fitness to drive**

The ability of a person with epilepsy to hold a driver licence depends on the likelihood of having a seizure while driving and the impact of a seizure on their ability to drive.
In assessing fitness to drive factors such as seizure type, control of seizures and the effectiveness of treatment are considered. The type of vehicle and the type of driving you do is also considered.

The National Transport Commission and Austroads have published a booklet titled Assessing Fitness to Drive which provides good information about how a person’s fitness to drive is assessed. This booklet is available on the Austroads website (www.austroads.com.au).

If you have any medical condition which may impact your ability to drive you must speak to your doctor about your safety to continue driving.

Your legal responsibility
Any person who holds a current driver licence and develops any serious or chronic medical condition or disability including seizures, epilepsy and blackouts is required by law to report their condition to the relevant driver licencing authority. This must be done as soon as possible even if you are still undergoing tests and a definite diagnosis of epilepsy hasn’t been confirmed.

Who makes the decision?
The driver licencing authority makes the final decision of whether you are safe to drive and not your doctor.

Your doctor provides a medical report to the driver licencing authority about your medical condition, the date of your last seizure and how your driving ability may be affected by your epilepsy. In some instances the driving authority may request a specialist assessment to provide further information on your fitness to drive.

Specialist Assessment
In some instances a specialist assessment is required e.g. an occupational therapy driving assessment. An occupational therapy driving assessment determines if any medical conditions and/or disabilities impact your fitness to drive.

Only occupational therapists who have undertaken the relevant studies in driver assessment are permitted to conduct driver assessments. You can contact your local driving authority to locate an assessor or contact OT Australia to find a registered OT specialist.

Conditional Licences
Even though you have an epilepsy diagnosis you may still be able to drive. It may be possible for the driver licencing authority to issue you a conditional licence. A conditional licence means that you can continue to drive as long as the conditions of your licence are met such as not driving at night or undergoing periodic reviews with your doctor.

Reinstatement of a licence
To regain your licence you must have a period of seizure-freedom. The period of seizure freedom will depend on a number of factors including what type of seizures you have, and the circumstances surrounding the seizure.

A 12 month minimum non-driving period may be required after which a conditional licence may be granted if you have remained seizure free.

Your licence may be reinstated earlier in some instances.

You may be required to have more regular reviews of your driver licence and be required to submit medical reports to support your continued ability to hold a driver licence.

Driving Commercial Vehicles
There are much stricter standards for driving a commercial vehicle (e.g. truck, taxi or bus) than there are for holding a private driving licence.

Usually, the period of seizure freedom must be significantly longer. Your epilepsy specialist will need to provide your driving authority with a medical report to assist in their decision about your fitness to drive.
Conditional licences may be considered dependent on the type of seizures you experience, the type of vehicle you drive and the duties you are performing. In some instances you may no longer be eligible to drive these vehicles.

What if I don’t report my epilepsy?

It is important that you notify the driver licencing authority of your epilepsy. Failure to provide this information could lead to serious consequences. If you are involved in an accident and it is found that your epilepsy was a contributing factor, you may be prosecuted and your insurance may not be valid.

What can I do?

- Continue to take your anti-epileptic drugs regularly and as prescribed.
- Maintain good self-care such as ensuring you have good quality sleep.
- Abstain from alcohol while driving.

Travel Assistance

- Consider alternative transport options such as public transport.
- Contact Centrelink to determine if you are eligible for the Mobility Allowance.
- Speak to your doctor to determine if you are eligible for subsidised taxi travel.
- If you are an NDIS client you may be able to include funding for transport in your plan.

Other Resources

Assessing Fitness to Drive booklet can downloaded for free at:


State & Territory Driver Licensing Authorities

Australian Capital Territory
Road Users Services
Phone: 13 22 81
Web: www.rego.act.gov.au

New South Wales
Roads and Maritime Services
Phone: 13 22 13; Web: www.rms.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory
Department of Lands and Planning
Phone: 1300 654 628 outside NT (08) 8999 3111
Web: www.nt.gov.au/transport/

Queensland
Transport and Main Roads
Phone: 13 23 80 (Outside QLD) (07) 3215 4500
Web: www.tmr.qld.gov.au

South Australia
Department of Planning, Transport & Infrastructure
Phone: 13 10 84; Web: www.transport.sa.gov.au

Tasmania
Department of Infrastructure Energy & Resources
Phone: 1300 851 225; Web: www.transport.tas.gov.au

Victoria
VicRoads
Phone: 13 11 71; Web: www.transport.tas.gov.au

Western Australia
Department of Transport
Phone: 13 11 56
Web: www.transport.wa.gov.au