

CASE STUDY

DVLA & Driving

After being diagnosed with Ménière's last year, it was frequently at the back of my mind that I had not informed the DVLA or my car insurers. Both my GP and consultant agreed that I got enough warning of an impending attack in order for me to drive safely. I don't know if I misunderstood them, but I certainly interpreted what they said as no action was required on my part, they had both documented what they had told me, so I assumed that was enough. BUT I always had that niggling doubt: was I legal? And what if I had an accident? I have driven less since diagnosis, and usually only to places from which I know my husband can come to retrieve me if I become unwell, and I gradually lost confidence. I realised that I could lose confidence altogether, and I didn't want that. We live in a rural area, while public transport is fairly good, there are lots of times when driving is better, such as visiting family and friends. Also, it is not that long ago since I worked in the NHS and had to drive for work, so it seemed sad that I had got to the point where I needed my husband to take me places even when I was well!! As a result, I decided to work on my driving, and rebuild that part of my life!



Almost at the same point I decided to drive more I found myself in discussion with a friend who was a lawyer (and who also has a Ménière's diagnosis) about driving; he was very clear 'there is a legal duty to inform the DVLA, it is the law'. I did my best to argue that my GP and consultant had said I was okay to drive, but I knew a sleepless night was coming. I also knew that the Ménière's Society recommended informing the DVLA (why did I ignore that??). The next day I decided to complete the DIZ1 form. I also phoned the DVLA to check that they really did want to know, of course they did!! The process turned out to be straightforward, I am lucky in that I could tick 'yes' to the questions 'Do you always have warning of attacks?' and 'would you have sufficient time to stop your vehicle safely?'. One of the helpful things about phoning the DVLA was that they could confirm that while waiting for them to assess my medical fitness to drive I just had to follow medical advice, which meant I could drive while waiting for their decision. The DVLA website says that it can take up to six weeks to get a decision (if it is going to take any longer they will write to you). I received a letter after five weeks which said "From the information we have received you satisfy the medical standards for safe driving. I am pleased to tell you may keep your group 1 (car/ motorcycle) driving licence." It feels so good to have that letter. They do go on to say if your condition gets worse or your doctor tells you not to drive, please let us know. That's okay, I would never drive against medical advice, or if I had symptoms.

Finally, with the DVLA letter in my hand I rang my car insurer. Their response was that as long as the DVLA are happy with me, and have imposed no restrictions then I do not have to declare my medical condition to them. It was good to hear that too. Driving definitely feels better now; I'm not ready to set off to the other end of the country, but at least I can build up what I'm doing and keep my independence, and that's really important to me.

Dizziness, vertigo and driving on the DVLA website: <https://www.gov.uk/dizziness-and-driving>

Form DIZ1: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/diz1-online-confidential-medical-information>

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Ménière's Society
for dizziness and balance disorders



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