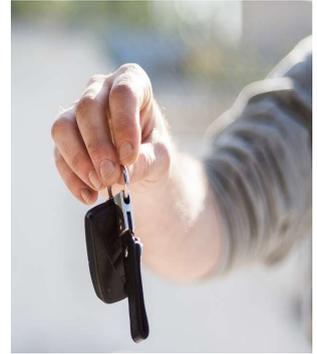


Reapplying for a driving licence

When I first developed Ménière's about 15 years ago I realised I could not drive when I was in the middle of a vertigo attack. I asked the consultant about this, and checked from time to time over the few years I saw him. His message was clear: that as long as I had a bit of warning before the attacks I would be okay to drive¹.

I was then coming to the later stages of the condition. The big vertigo attacks were lessening, however, I experienced two or three drop attacks. These are quite different from vertigo attacks. Out of the blue, but fully conscious, you suddenly lose all sense of balance, you have no idea where your arms, legs or body are and you fall in a heap, only to recover after a second or two – very different from the slow recovery after a spinning vertigo attack. I wasn't driving when I experienced the drop attacks, but they were terrifying and potentially dangerous; I realised that I couldn't possibly drive now. I got an urgent consultant appointment. The advice was that I had a 'public duty' to inform the DVLA about this change in symptoms. I did, and they duly told me to surrender my licence.



That was six years ago, and I spent the next few years getting used to buses, trains and relying on my long-suffering partner. As it happened, I never had any more major drop attacks, though I did have a few minor versions and by about 18 months later they seemed to have gone. I had no way of knowing whether they would return, so I didn't consider driving again for over two years. To my surprise, the consultant was quite positive, however, I didn't yet feel confident. Nor did I feel much more confident at my follow-up a year later.

So, it was after five years that I finally asked if I could get my licence back. I hadn't had a drop attack or a major vertigo attack for two or three years by then, though I still even now get occasional minor vertigo. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the process was very easy. I applied, they asked for a consultant report, he gave a completely positive report and my licence appeared in the post one morning.

I hadn't driven for some time so I began slowly. It took some time to get a new car, and of course insurance wasn't that cheap because I didn't have a no-claims bonus, not having been insured during all that time. I decided, very wisely I think, to have some driving lessons, and that was really helpful, giving me confidence, and reminding me of one or two things I had maybe been neglecting in decades of driving (like when to look in the mirrors!). I drive now much more carefully than I did five years ago, indeed so cautiously that I now have to worry about falling asleep, and I've decided not to go on long motorway journeys. The good news is that I'm driving regularly and enjoying the freedom. I don't have to spend my time worrying about unreliable bus and train connections.

Find out more about reapplying for your licence on the DVLA website:

<https://www.gov.uk/reapply-driving-licence-medical-condition>

© Meniere's Society 2019. Registered charity number 297246.

This factsheet may be printed, photocopied, downloaded or distributed free of charge provided the Meniere's Society is properly credited and no profit gained from its use. Permission to reproduce in any other way must be obtained from the Meniere's Society. For further information or additional copies of our factsheets, please contact us.


Ménière's Society
for dizziness and balance disorders

¹ There is also a legal requirement to inform the DVLA. Visit <https://www.gov.uk/report-driving-medical-condition>

