



**DRIVING**  
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Optometry Wales  
Optometreg Cymru



## Overview

It is important that your vision is clear to be able to drive safely. This leaflet gives you information about vision and driving. This includes what to do if you feel you can't see well enough to drive, or if your optometrist tells you to stop driving. If you have any questions about your eyes, please speak to your optometrist.

## Driving safely

Having good vision is important to help you drive safely. Here are our top tips to help you see clearly when driving.

### Glasses

- If your optometrist has told you to wear glasses for driving, make sure you wear them, even for short trips.
- If you need to wear glasses for driving, we recommend keeping a spare pair in the car. This is in case something happens to your main pair. In some countries outside the UK this is a legal requirement.
- If you wear contact lenses, it is important to have a pair of glasses in the car. This is in case you need to take your lenses out for any reason.
- Even if you don't need to wear distance glasses all the time, you will probably find they are helpful when the lighting is poor, for example when you are driving at night. They should also make it easier to see during the day as well.

### Driving at night

- If you find headlights particularly dazzling, ask your optometrist if they can recommend anything to help.
- Keep your windscreen clean and smudge-free to reduce the impact of glare.
- Keep your glasses clean and smudge-free if you wear them.
- When presented with bright oncoming headlights, keep your eyes open and cast your eyes to look at the curb or side of the road. This will help minimise the effect of adaptive and discomfort glare.

Sunshine can dazzle drivers, particularly when the sun is low in the sky. If you wear glasses, you may find it helpful to have a pair of prescription sunglasses in the car.

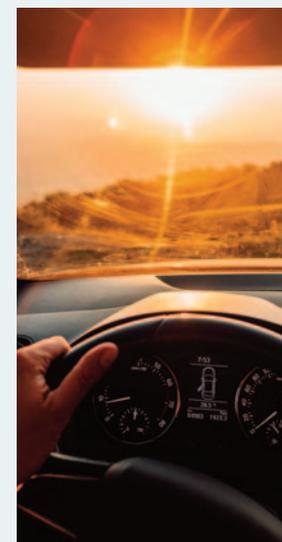
- Remember to dip your headlights when required. If you have automatically dimming headlamps, remember they don't always detect oncoming cars, cyclists and pedestrians, so know how to dip them manually.
- At night, adjust your rear view mirror to the 'night' position, if available, to reduce glare from cars behind you.

### Tinted lenses

- Do not wear tinted lenses at night or when visibility is poor. Although you may be tempted to wear tinted lenses at night to reduce the brightness of oncoming headlights, the tint will also reduce the brightness of the surroundings.

### Sunglasses

- Sunshine can dazzle drivers, particularly when the sun is low in the sky. If you wear glasses, you may find it helpful to have a pair of prescription sunglasses in the car. You can also wear clip-on sunglasses over your prescription glasses.
- If your glasses have photochromic lenses that go darker in the sunshine, you will notice they do not go as dark in the car. This is because the windscreen blocks much of the light that causes the darkening from the sun. If these lenses do not go dark enough for driving, you may find it helpful to wear clip-on sunglasses over them.
- Only certain levels of tint are suitable for driving during the day. Your local optometrist will be able to explain which can be used safely and legally. You should not wear tinted sunglasses of any kind while driving at night.



## Frames

- When choosing glasses for driving, try to avoid frames that have thick, heavy sides because they will block your vision to the side (like the blinkers you see horses wearing).
- Frames with thinner sides are better for driving as you will be able to see to the side more easily.

## When to see your optometrist

It is important to have regular eye examinations and check your vision between them, to make sure that your eyes are healthy and your vision is clear. Your vision can deteriorate slowly without you noticing it. This is more likely if your vision gets worse in one eye only, and you can see clearly with the other eye. We recommend that you know what is normal for you in each eye separately (with glasses if you need them). You should visit your optometrist if you notice any changes.

Even if you do not notice any changes in your vision, we recommend regular eye examinations to make sure your eyes are healthy and you are seeing as clearly and comfortably as possible. For most people, we recommend an eye examination at least every two years.

## The legal requirements to drive a car: vision and visual field

In the UK, there are two standards that you must meet to be able to drive a car on the road:

- how well you can see (your vision); and
- how far you can see around you (your visual field).

It is important to remember that telling the DVLA or DVA about your medical condition does not necessarily mean that they will take your driving licence away from you.



## Vision

Vision is measured in two ways. Firstly, by reading the letters on the optometrist's chart, and secondly by reading a number plate outdoors. You need to be able to do both to drive a car legally, even for short trips.

Vision for driving a car is measured with both eyes together, so it doesn't matter if you are blind in one eye as long as the other eye meets the standard.

### The standards are:

- The line on the optometrist's sight test chart that you must be able to read is the 6/12 line. Your optometrist will be able to tell you if you can read it, and if you need to wear your glasses to do so.
- The second test that you must pass to be able to drive is to read a number plate (in the style introduced in 2001) from 20 metres away. You can check this yourself at home.

If your optometrist tells you that you need to wear your glasses to meet either of these standards, you must wear them every time you drive, even if you rarely drive or if it is only a short distance.



### Visual field

The visual field test measures how far you can see around you while you are looking straight ahead. Your optometrist will normally measure this by asking you to look into a machine, while focusing on a dot or a dim light in the centre. You will need to click a button when you see a small light flashing around the outside of your vision. During the test, the machine checks whether you are looking away from the centre or pressing the button too often.

Conditions such as strokes and brain tumours may affect your visual field and your ability to drive. Eye conditions such as diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma can also affect your visual field and ability to drive safely, if you have them in both

eyes. For driving, it is what you can see with both eyes together that is important. This means that if you have an eye disease such as glaucoma in one eye only, you will normally be OK to drive as long as there is nothing wrong with the other eye.

If your optometrist tells you that you must not drive, you must stop driving immediately. You must do this even if you drive rarely or only on short journeys.

### Telling the DVLA and DVA

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), and the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) in Northern Ireland, maintains the list of registered and licensed drivers and vehicles in the UK.

You must tell the DVLA or DVA if:

- you can no longer meet the vision standards for driving, or if a condition or disability has got worse since you got your licence (see [gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving](http://gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving)); or

Driving when you are medically unfit to do so is a criminal offence, and you could face a fine of up to £1,000. You could be putting yourself or others at risk.

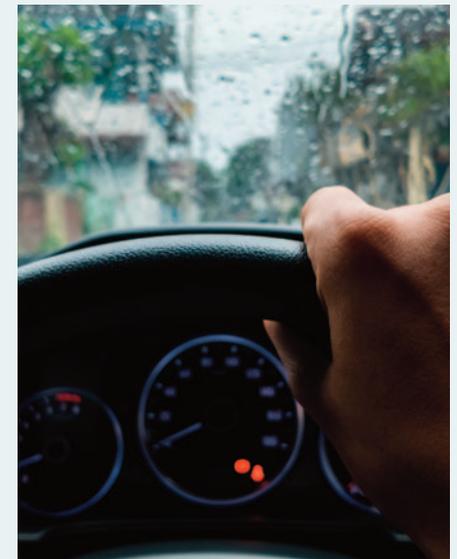
- you have certain medical conditions, even if you can still meet the vision standards for driving. There is a full up-to-date list on the DVLA website at [gov.uk/health-conditionsand-driving](http://gov.uk/health-conditionsand-driving).

You must tell DVLA if you:

- have a certain type of eye condition that affects both eyes (or one eye when you only have vision in one eye)
- have been told you may not meet the visual standards for driving by a GP, optician or eye specialist.

The eye conditions you must tell DVLA about are:

- blepharospasm
- diabetic retinopathy (with laser treatment)
- diplopia (double vision)
- glaucoma
- nyctalopia (night blindness)
- retinitis pigmentosa.



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If the condition only affects one eye and you have sight in both eyes, you only have to tell DVLA if you:

- do not meet the visual standards for driving
- have been told you may not meet the visual standards for driving by a GP, optician or eye specialist.

You can report medical conditions to the DVLA online at [gov.uk/report-driving-medicalcondition](https://gov.uk/report-driving-medicalcondition). You can also do this by filling in form V1, which you can find at [gov.uk/government/publications/v1-online-confidential-medicalinformation](https://gov.uk/government/publications/v1-online-confidential-medicalinformation).

If you live in Northern Ireland, visit [nidirect.gov.uk](https://nidirect.gov.uk) for information on how to report a medical condition to the DVA.

#### **What will happen when I tell the DVLA or DVA about my medical condition?**

The DVLA or DVA will look at your application and decide whether you need to have further tests done to find out if you are fit to drive. They may contact your doctor or consultant or ask you to have extra tests. This may include more visual field tests, to make sure you are still legally fit to drive. The DVLA or DVA will tell you whether you are able to drive in the meantime.

**It is important to remember that telling the DVLA or DVA about your medical condition does not necessarily mean that they will take your driving licence away from you.**

#### **What will happen if I continue to drive when I should not?**

Driving when you are medically unfit to do so is a criminal offence, and you could face a fine of up to £1,000. You could be putting yourself or others at risk.

- You may be prosecuted if you are involved in an accident.
- You may find that your car insurance will not cover you if you continue to drive when you should not.

#### **Buses and lorries**

If you drive a bus or a lorry (group 2 licence), the rules relating to vision are stricter than for driving a car. Your optometrist will be able to tell you about this. There are also more medical conditions that you must report to the DVLA or DVA. For more information, please visit [gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving](https://gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving) or [nidirect.gov.uk](https://nidirect.gov.uk) for Northern Ireland.