



# DRIVING AND THE HEART - 1 - Ordinary Driving Licences

Doctors and their patients should be reminded that the law states that no-one may drive "if they are liable to sudden disabling attacks of giddiness or faintness". Certain patients with heart disease at certain times in their lives are more liable to disabling cardiovascular events, e.g., arrhythmia, systemic embolism. Temporary cessation of driving is therefore advisable. In general the guidelines are much less stringent. The DVLA may not always require a condition to be notified. The DVLA publication 'At a Glance Guide to the Current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive' provides further guidance on this aspect.

Patients with the following conditions should be advised not to drive under the circumstances specified:

- A. **ANGINA** occurring at rest or while driving. For at least 4 weeks after **MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION, CORONARY ARTERY BYPASS GRAFTING, or unstable ANGINA**. For one week after **CORONARY ANGIOPLASTY**.
- B. **ARRHYTHMIA**, if the arrhythmia distracts the driver's attention or renders him/her liable to sudden impairment of cerebral function. Driving permitted when underlying cause has been identified and controlled for at least 4 weeks.
- C. **PACEMAKER INSERTION**, within the last 1 week. The patient should inform the DVLA.
- D. **CATHETER ABLATION** Driving must cease for at least 1 week after ablation.
- E. **IMPLANTABLE CARDIOVERTER DEFIBRILLATOR**. The patient should inform the DVLA. Driving may be permitted after 6 months provided that no discharge or symptomatic antitachycardia pacing has taken place and that any previous discharge was not accompanied by syncope.
- F. **SYNCOPE**, until cause identified and symptoms controlled.

More detailed guidance may be obtained from the publication "At a Glance Guide to the Current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive" and the website [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk). Any doctor requiring a copy should apply to DVLA, Longview Road, Morrision, Swansea, SA99 1TU. Tel. (01792) 783686.

With the exception of the conditions detailed above, other cardiovascular disorders, e.g. hypertension, valvular and congenital heart disease, are not usually a bar to driving. Unexplained syncope and cerebrovascular events which may cause driver incapacity do need specialist evaluation, including neurological assessment where indicated.