

ADULT ADHD IN DAILY LIFE · 8.5

ADHD and Driving: What the Evidence and the DVLA Say

ADHD and driving has a fuller evidence base than most adults realise. The headline is consistent: untreated ADHD raises road accident risk at population level, and treatment reduces it substantially. The DVLA position is specific.

FOR

Drivers with ADHD in the UK

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

ADHD and Driving: What the Evidence and the DVLA Say

What the evidence shows

- **Higher baseline accident risk at population level.** The 2014 Chang et al. JAMA Psychiatry study followed over 17,000 adults with ADHD and found a significantly higher rate of serious transport accidents than the general population. Subsequent reviews (Fuermaier 2017) replicate the pattern.
- **Substantial reduction on medication.** The Chang study found around a 58 percent reduction in serious accident rate during medicated periods in male drivers with ADHD. The female effect was smaller. The pattern of elevated baseline risk and reduced risk on medication is consistent across the literature.
- **The mechanism is consistent with what ADHD does generally.** Sustained attention on long journeys, working memory for route changes, reaction time, switching focus between mirrors and road, impulse control around overtaking and speed, emotional regulation when frustrated by other drivers.

What the DVLA says

- **ADHD is notifiable in specific circumstances.** The DVLA's Assessing Fitness to Drive guidance: the diagnosis alone does not automatically require notification, but where symptoms are significant and affect safe driving, notification is required. The threshold is impairment that affects safe driving, not the diagnosis in isolation.
- **Failing to notify when required is a criminal offence.** Drivers can be fined and prosecuted. Insurance can be invalidated. The cost of getting it wrong is significant. Notification rarely results in licence revocation; the DVLA may issue a shorter-duration licence subject to medical review.
- **Prescribed ADHD medication is compatible with driving.** Stimulants are on the specified-drugs list under section 5A of the Road Traffic Act 1988, but the statutory medical defence applies when taken as prescribed and the driver is not impaired. Carry a copy of the prescription or dispensing label on longer journeys.
- **Group 2 licences (lorries and buses) are stricter.** The threshold is tighter. Talk to your prescribing clinician and check the current DVLA guidance specifically for Group 2 entitlement; do not assume the Group 1 position applies.

What to do

- **Notify the DVLA if the impairment threshold is met.** The form is online at gov.uk. The DVLA may write to your clinician; this is normal. Most notifications result in continued driving entitlement.
- **Tell your insurer.** Most car insurance policies require disclosure of medical conditions that affect driving. Failing to disclose can invalidate the policy. Disclosure rarely raises premiums significantly where the condition is well-managed.
- **Take particular care during medication titration.** Sleep, alertness and side-effect profile are most variable in the first weeks of medication or after a dose change. Drive cautiously during this period; defer long journeys where possible.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP or NHS adult ADHD service if ADHD has not been formally assessed and driving is being affected. Private adult ADHD assessment with a CQC-registered provider is a legitimate parallel route where the NHS wait is not workable. Where you are diagnosed and the medication question is open, NeuroFX prescribing and shared care cover the pathway. For Group 2 licensing questions and DVLA specifics, the prescribing clinician's view is the right starting point. Seek urgent help via 111, 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis or significant safety concern.

SOURCES

DVLA Assessing fitness to drive; gov.uk health conditions and driving; Chang et al. 2014 (JAMA Psychiatry); Fuermaier et al. 2017 (J Neural Transm); NICE NG87; BNF

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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