

Driving after back injury or surgery

There are no restrictions by law or from the DVLA other than that a driver “should not be liable to symptoms likely to cause sudden impairment of driving”, and that “any physical disability must be able to be overcome by appropriate adaptations to a vehicle”.

If in doubt contact the DVLA at:-
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
Medical Advisory Group
Longview Road
Swansea SA99 9TU
Tel: 01792 783 798

When you write to the DVLA for information include details of your:-
full name
date of birth
driving licence number
as much information about your medical condition as possible.

Starting driving again

Usually, you can start driving again approximately one month after surgery, but we recommend that you check you are able to perform an emergency stop without problems.

When you first leave hospital, we generally recommend not sitting in a car for longer than 15-20 minutes at a time. Long journeys should be interrupted by periods of gentle walking of up to 5 minutes. This should continue for several weeks following discharge.

It is essential to maintain a good posture when sitting in the car. Your seat should provide support for your lower back. The entire length of your thighs should be supported by your seat, with your hips and knees at right angles. Both feet should be flat on the floor. Avoid slumping or sagging.

To get out, swing your legs round, slide forward keeping your back straight, put one foot in front of the other on the ground and straighten your hips and knees.

Please ask for advice if you are in doubt about any activities. If you do have any difficulties, please avoid driving until you have been seen by your consultant in out-patients.

Avoiding neck trauma

Head restraints in cars are provided for safety not comfort, to prevent the head from being jerked violently backwards during an impact. This reduces the risk of severe injury to the neck. The top of the restraint should be positioned at or above eye level and as close to the back of the head as possible. No part should be unpadding - for instance where a rear seat passenger may hit their heads in the event of an accident.