

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

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A seizure may cause an individual to lose control over their bodily functions — or even become unconscious. If such an event happens while someone is behind the wheel, the result could be catastrophic. DMVs in many states may suspend a driver's license if a driver is diagnosed with epilepsy or suffers from seizures. The restrictions are for the driver's safety — and for those who share the road with them.

Being diagnosed with epilepsy or seizures can make getting a license or maintaining driving privileges a challenge, but it is possible for the two to coexist. This guide explains how.

The biggest driving risk if you have been diagnosed with epilepsy or other types of disorders causing seizures is that you may have a seizure while driving. If you are on the road, losing control could lead to a severe accident, potentially causing property damage or injuring pedestrians, other drivers, and yourself. A [classic study](#) of nearly 17,000 respondents found that **those who suffer from epilepsy or seizures are no more likely to cause an accident than an average driver. However, should an accident occur, the risk of severe injury or damage is 40% greater.**

Medication could also contribute to increasing the risk of a serious accident. As with many types of prescription medication, operating machinery and vehicles is typically not advised. Seizure medication has side effects that can affect a person's ability to drive safely and defensively. Some of the [most common side effects](#) (especially in the beginning) of anti-seizure medications that could impair driving include drowsiness, blurry vision and dizziness.

In addition, driving too soon after experiencing seizures could potentially flag a driver as [risky with insurance companies](#). Drivers who appear reckless or more comfortable with risky behavior are considered more likely to cause an accident.

Living with epilepsy does not mean a person can no longer drive. Just like it is possible to live a normal life despite being prone to seizures, it is possible to drive if you make adjustments and know how to manage the condition safely. Some ways to drive safely with epilepsy include:

- **Report the condition to the DMV:** Each state has its own guidelines for drivers with epilepsy. Reporting your condition to the DMV alerts them and provides you with information about potential restrictions.
- **Work closely with your doctor:** Your doctor will help you manage the condition and, in many states, be your representative if you are seeking reinstatement of your license.
- **Take your anti-seizure medication:** Anti-seizure prescriptions can help reduce how often you get seizures and their severity.

- **Avoid triggers:** Driving while you are [stressed or tired](#) could increase the chances of a seizure. In other cases, flashing lights could cause one, so you may want to do more of your driving during the day.
- **Avoid driving during certain circumstances:** Driving at high speeds or during times of day when the sun may affect your vision should be avoided to prevent the risk of a seizure.
- **Maintain auto insurance:** [Car insurance](#) coverage may be more important than ever. Consider upgrading to [full coverage car insurance](#) that will pay for damage you cause if you are at fault in an accident.

Making sure you have a current car insurance policy is critical. Carriers generally cannot drop you because you have seizures. However, if your license was suspended or restricted by the DMV, you may not be able to insure your vehicle. Contact your carrier and notify them of your condition to make sure you are covered.

The [best insurance companies](#) offer add-ons that expand your car insurance. Epileptic drivers should consider full coverage car insurance and raising coverage limits where possible to account for the possibility of costlier accidents. Lowering your insurance deductibles may also be helpful if you worry about the higher risk of accidents — it will be far easier to pay a \$500 deductible over \$1,000. Keep in mind that lower deductibles mean higher premiums, so look at your financial situation to decide which works best for you.

Drivers with epilepsy or seizure disorders typically face restrictions from the DMV. Each state has its own regulations and limits for drivers who have recently experienced a seizure, with varying levels of restrictions. Even if you do not report your seizures to the DMV, they may find out — in some states, doctors and hospitals are often required to report people who experience a seizure while in their care.

Depending on the circumstances, a state's DMV typically has guidelines in place for drivers who have recently had seizures. They may:

- Temporarily suspend your driver's license for three to six months, on average.
- Require you to periodically report to a doctor to monitor your recovery.
- Review the case through a Medical Advisory or Medical Review Board after a set period.
- Ask for a recommendation letter from your doctor before allowing you to drive again.
- Possibly require a written, driving or vision test (depending on the circumstances and severity of the seizures) before reinstating your driver's license.

These guidelines are in place because states essentially want to make sure a driver with epilepsy does not suffer from frequent seizures, which could lead to a serious crash and/or injuring others while behind the wheel.

State by state laws

States have varying laws regarding drivers who suffer from seizures. [Epilepsy.com](#) publishes information based on each state's regulations.

Cynthia Paez Bowman states, "Laws are written to protect public safety and to grant the privilege of driving to people who are the least likely to have an accident." Seizures can affect

someone's driving privileges temporarily, but with proper medical care, a driver may be safely back on the road after they can prove they have not experienced seizures over several months to a few years.

Cynthia Paez Bowman reminds those with epilepsy that "The DMV, not the doctor, makes the decision on driving in most states." Even if your doctor feels you are fit to drive, they can only make a recommendation for the Department of Motor Vehicles to review and rule on. If you are diagnosed with epilepsy or another condition that may increase the chance of seizures, notify your state's DMV, continue medical treatment and work on a plan with your doctor or healthcare provider to get back safely on the road.

How will science and technology make it easier for those with epilepsy to drive again? The answer is - Self-Driving Cars. It's not a dream. It's a reality that's happening NOW. A serendipitous event spurred on by the death of Sebastian Thrun's best friend, he vowed that he would find a way to prevent fatal crashes caused by human error. This idea of a driverless car could be an idea that people with epilepsy have always been waiting.

Now a professor of computer science at Stanford University, Thrun joined forces with Google in 2007 to develop cars that drive on autopilot. The state of Nevada has granted Google a license for trial on public roads – bringing self-driving vehicles one step closer to production. And the California State Senate has recently approved a bill that would legalize self-driving cars in the state. Self-driving cars basically work by computer and memory.

(The onboard computer system has a 360-degree spatial awareness.) Equipped with video cameras, radar sensors and a laser range finder, the test cars have driven 180,000 miles in California all by themselves.

"Before any route is driven using the automated technology, first the routes are driven to capture a detailed digital map of all of the features on the way. By mapping things like lane markers and traffic signs, the software in the car becomes familiar with the environment and its characteristics in advance."

When the car later tackles the route without driver assistance, the same cameras, laser sensors and radar help determine where other cars are and how fast they're moving.

Meanwhile the computer software controls acceleration and deceleration and mounted cameras read and interpret traffic lights, signals, and road signs.

"The problems are all about computers and information. How to get the right info to the cars at the right time," a Google spokesman continued. "And it's all made possible by our data centers, which are able to process the enormous amounts of info gathered by these vehicles."

And in the future, autonomous cars will be able to communicate with one another, allowing them to negotiate lane changes and passing, analysts predict.

Right now, the Tesla and Toyota Prius seem to be in the lead of those developing self-driving cars. And most major car companies have advanced self-driving car projects in the works: from Audi to BMW, Cadillac, Ford, GM, Honda, Hyundai, Lexus, Nissan, Mercedes, Volkswagen, and Volvo.

The obvious advantage would be for people unable to drive, like those with epilepsy, is that the car would be independently mobile. It would mean that no sort of supervision is required to keep the journey safe and user-friendly. Those who suffer from epilepsy don't have to wait for the next best discovery in anti-epilepsy drugs to remove the barriers which keep them from living a fuller life.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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