

# Driving with ADHD

ADHD is a neurological condition with core symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Although you may choose to drive with ADHD (and are legally permitted to do so), you may sometimes find that your symptoms interfere with your ability to drive safely.

## Different header options

Difficulties with executive function (e.g., sustained concentration) and other symptoms related to ADHD (e.g., risk-taking), may contribute to increased risks on the road. Your inattention may cause you to become distracted more easily and if you experience impulsivity as a result of your ADHD, you may be more likely to react badly to other drivers or traffic conditions. Research shows that the majority of motor incidents occur as a result of inattentive driving. Remember though, this also applies to people who do not have ADHD.



## What are the specific risks associated with ADHD and driving?

Studies show that adults with a diagnosis of ADHD are more likely to:

- Have car accidents (up to 50% more likely);
- Commit speeding offences;
- Be injured in an incident;
- Have their license suspended.

Nevertheless, there tend to be two 'types' of drivers with ADHD: a group that is more easily distracted and impulsive, and a group that drives safely. In other words, not everyone with ADHD will experience issues with driving, but a substantial percentage does. This emphasises why getting an appropriate diagnosis for adult ADHD is so important, and why it is critical to treat ADHD.

## Should I disclose my ADHD to the DVLA?

In many countries, including the UK, there are no explicit guidelines or driving legislation regarding ADHD or its treatment. However, if your ADHD impacts your ability to drive safely, you must inform the DVLA. If you were to be involved in an accident without first notifying the DVLA of your ADHD, you may be prosecuted/fined up to £1,000.

Web [gov.uk/adhd-and-driving](http://gov.uk/adhd-and-driving)

---

## Tips for driving safely, smartly, and sensibly

### Overcoming inattention and distractibility

- It is recommended that you turn off any electronic devices whilst you are driving. If you choose to keep them on, leave them out of sight so you are not tempted to look at them in response to a call or notification
- Multi-tasking can be dangerous – especially for people with ADHD – so try not to eat or drink whilst you are driving
- It is suggested that you use pre-set radio stations or audio playlists
- Keep communication with others in the car to a minimum if you can. If you need to, let others know that you are distractible and ask that they do not talk to you whilst you are driving. It may be easier for passengers to remain in the backseat
- It may help if you get familiar with your route before you get on the road. If you do need to use a map or sat-nav, park up safely beforehand to take a look
- It may help to describe aloud what you are doing whilst you are driving. This will help to keep your attention on the task at hand and may assist with planning ahead
- It may also help to take supplemental driver training to focus on specific symptoms of ADHD, such as controlling negative emotions or improving attention skills. You may also benefit from using an ADHD specialist driving instructor, with specialist knowledge of ADHD and how it impacts your learning/driving

Drivers with ADHD may be at even greater risk during periods of low stimulus or ‘dull driving’ (e.g., on motorways) which can be monotonous, and where high speeds are more likely to cause accidents. In these instances, you should take regular breaks or perhaps allow someone else to take over driving after a while.

### Automatic vs. manual cars

Consider whether you are a more attentive driver when using a manual transmission as opposed to an automatic. Use of a manual car is associated with greater arousal and stimulation, which is critical for engaging adults with ADHD. You may find that you are more productive and can focus more easily when an activity is more involving or personally engaging.

## Medication

Official reports of accidents in addition to the number of self-reported motor-related incidents suggest that untreated ADHD makes driving unsafe. Use of both medication and psychological strategies are likely to help you reduce your inattention and make you less impulsive, in turn increasing your safety on the road. Drivers with ADHD need to be especially aware of their own abilities as part of their behavioural management of the disorder.

### Does driving actually improve with ADHD medication?

Studies have shown that taking stimulant medication (e.g., Methylphenidate) significantly improves driving performance in patients with ADHD. Those who take medication can usually drive as normal but should be very cautious about not driving when the medication is wearing off and concentration can suddenly change. You should not drive when feeling tired or unsafe.

