



Seizures and Driving

*Understanding Safety, Independence,
and Driving Regulations*



SAFETY



INDEPENDENCE



SUPPORT



AWARENESS

Aaron Fernandez
Activity Coordinator

Driving and Us



CLINIC



SCHOOL



WORK



GROCERIES

*Driving connects us to the people, places, and opportunities
that matter most in our daily lives.*

RISKS OF DRIVING WITH EPILEPSY

0.1% – 1%

of all motor vehicle
crashes are caused
by seizures.



55%

of seizures occurring
behind the wheel
result in a crash.



21% – 45%

chance of another seizure
within 2 years after a first
unprovoked seizure.



**A seizure while driving can have
devastating consequences.**

Protect yourself. Protect your passengers.
Protect others on the road.

California Law - Driving and Seizures

- Seizures are classified as “lapse of consciousness (LOC)” disorders in California and are evaluated by the DMV based on whether the individual can safely operate a motor vehicle
- Physicians are REQUIRED to report patients with disorders characterized by lapses of consciousness
- Follows the standard of minimum 3 month seizure freedom
- Professional/commercial drivers are subject to significantly stricter regulations than private drivers, and a history of seizures typically disqualifies individuals from commercial driving unless very stringent criteria are met

State	Seizure Free Period	Reporting
California	3 months	Mandatory
New York	12 months	Not Mandatory
New Jersey	6 months	Mandatory
Ohio	No fixed interval	Not Mandatory

CALIFORNIA DMV & EPILEPSY

What Happens After a Seizure?



1. PHYSICIAN REPORT

Physicians are required to report disorders characterized by lapses of consciousness (including epilepsy).



2. DMV REVIEW

- The DMV reviews each case individually.
- There is no automatic permanent suspension.
- Decisions are based on medical information and driving safety.



3. FACTORS CONSIDERED

- Length of seizure freedom
- Medication compliance
- Physician recommendations
- Overall risk of another seizure



4. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

- No action taken
- Medical probation
- Suspension or revocation of driving privileges



SEIZURE



PHYSICIAN
REPORT



DMV
REVIEW



DRIVING
DECISION



KEY TAKEAWAY

A diagnosis of epilepsy does not automatically mean you cannot drive.

The DMV's goal is to balance independence with public safety.

Favorable Factors

1. Seizures during practitioner-directed medication changes
2. Focal seizures without impaired awareness (e.g., focal aware seizures) that do not interfere with motor control
3. Established pattern of seizures occurring exclusively during sleep (sometimes referred to “nocturnal seizures”)
4. Seizures secondary to provoking factors that are unlikely to recur (such as metabolic, toxic, or infectious conditions, or other acute illnesses).

Auras and seizures occurring during sleep deprivation are no longer considered as reliable favorable factors as they were in the past, given conflicting evidence of their benefit in averting MVAs.

Unfavorable Factors

1. Unambiguous nonadherence with medications or medical visits
2. Seizures related to substance use disorder
3. Prior crashes due to seizures
4. Prior record of MVAs or violations of driving regulations (if driving record is available)
5. Increasing number of seizures in the recent past from prior baseline
6. Seizures refractory to multiple antiseizure treatments
7. Frequent seizures after a seizure-free period
8. Individual is having recurrent seizures of which they are unaware
9. Structural brain lesion (e.g., stroke, cortical dysplasia, or tumor) or a brain disease likely to worsen over time (e.g., Alzheimer disease or malignancy).

TRUCK DRIVERS (CDL)

Commercial driving has strict medical requirements.



STRICT FEDERAL STANDARDS

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has strict medical requirements for commercial drivers.



FEDERAL SEIZURE REQUIREMENTS

Many applicants with a history of epilepsy must be seizure-free for 8 years or longer and may require a Federal Seizure Exemption.



COMPANY POLICIES MAY BE STRICTER

Employers may impose medical requirements beyond federal minimum standards.



PERSONAL vs. COMMERCIAL DRIVING

Eligibility for a personal driver's license does not automatically qualify an individual for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).



KEY TAKEAWAYS



SAFETY FIRST

Driving is a privilege.
Make safe choices
to protect yourself
and others.



SEIZURE CONTROL MATTERS

The best way to
maintain driving
privileges is
seizure control.



WORK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

Be open and honest.
Follow treatment
plans and report
seizures promptly.



EACH CASE IS INDIVIDUAL

The DMV reviews
many factors—
not every report
leads to suspension.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Support, resources,
and planning can
help you stay safe
and independent.