

## ***Nurse Educator Praveen Kaur Gosal of Diabetic Society of Singapore drives the message home about being safe on the road when you have diabetes.***

People with diabetes, even people who take insulin, should have no problems with driving but as driving requires absolute focus and attention, as well as quick responses, it is important to take extra care when on the road. Alcohol, drugs, drowsiness and physical exhaustion can adversely affect a person's ability to drive well. Under the influence of alcohol and drugs, any driver is likely to make mistakes that could cost the loss of lives.

### **How does diabetes affect my ability to drive?**

In the short term, diabetes causes hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) or hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). Both can negatively affect the motorist's ability to drive properly.

In the long run, diabetes can lead to problems that affect driving. It may cause nerve damage in your hands, legs and feet, thus, affecting your ability to feel. In some cases, diabetes can cause blindness or lead to amputation of the lower limbs.

Some people with diabetes need to take insulin or glucose-lowering drugs that may sometimes cause their blood glucose levels to drop too low. This can lead to complications that can affect one's ability to drive, such as:

- Dizziness
- Trembling
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Blurred vision
- Slurred speech
- Feeling hot, followed by excessive sweating
- Tingling or numbness in the mouth or lips

### **Can I still drive?**

Having diabetes does not mean you cannot drive a car or ride a motorbike at all. As long as your diabetes is well controlled and your doctor has given the green light for you to drive, there is no reason why you cannot have or hang on to your driving licence. However, you should not drive if you:

- Experience hypoglycaemia
- Have problems with your eyesight. If you do, correct it
- Have numbness or weakness in your limbs.
- If you have suffered a severe hypoglycaemic event recently
- Have been drinking alcohol

### **Hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar)**

Avoid driving while you're hyperglycaemic as it could leave you feeling unwell or tired.

### **Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)**

Try to avoid situations of low blood sugars if you wish to drive by observing these rules:

- Always carry plenty of snacks including a fast acting source of carbohydrate in your car e.g. biscuits, muesli bar, glucose tablets and candy.
- Ensure that you have your meal or snack before and during long journeys. Try not to go on an empty stomach for more than two hours during a long journey.
- Plan your trip to ensure that you do not miss or delay a meal or snack.
- Check your blood sugar levels before and during your car journey.
- Carry identification both on yourself and in your car to state that you have diabetes
- Make sure you always carry your blood glucose meter with you
- Be aware that changing your tyres or pushing your car can cause your sugar levels to drop.

If you feel hypoglycaemic while driving:

- STOP driving as soon as it is safe to do so
- Check your blood sugar immediately. If your glucose level is low, treat with a fast acting sugar such as juice, soda with sugar (not diet), hard candy, or glucose tablets. Check your glucose level again after waiting for 15 minutes. Treat again if sugar level is still less than 4mmol/l.
- Once your glucose level has risen to your target range, eat a more substantial snack or meal containing protein.
- Do not continue driving until your blood glucose level has improved.

ON  
THE  
MOVE