

ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVING

Driving Safety and Alzheimer's Disease

[Español](#)

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In the early stages of [Alzheimer's disease](#) or [other types of dementia](#), some people are able to keep driving. But, as memory and decision-making skills get worse, at some point it will no longer be safe to be behind the wheel.

When should someone with dementia stop driving?

People with dementia often do not realize they are having driving problems. Family members and friends will need to carefully observe the person's driving for signs that it's no longer safe for them to drive, such as fender benders or forgetting how to find familiar places like the grocery store or even home.

Signs that someone with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia should stop driving include:

- New dents or scrapes on the car or multiple near misses or crashes
- Taking a long time to do a simple errand and not being able to explain why
- Confusing the brake and gas pedals
- Multiple traffic tickets or warnings
- Comments from neighbors or friends about unsafe driving
- Other health issues that might affect driving, such as changes in vision, hearing, and movement
- Speeding or driving too slowly
- Making sudden lane changes or other poor decisions in traffic



- Recommendations from a doctor to modify driving habits or quit driving

Some people with dementia decide on their own not to drive, while others do not want to give up driving. Consider planning ahead, before the signs of unsafe driving appear, for how you will approach the situation. You can talk about other transportation options and how the person can continue the activities they enjoy.

Driving with Alzheimer's Disease



Watch on  YouTube

Evaluating driving skills

Friends and family members are often first to notice the signs of unsafe driving. Another way to evaluate driving skills is to have the person's driving skills assessed by a professional. The American Occupational Therapy Association maintains a [national database of driving specialists](#), or you can check with your state's Department of Motor Vehicles or a health care professional to recommend someone who can evaluate driving skills. Note that there may be fees associated with these types of assessments. There are also a number of online resources for assessing driving skills yourself.

What are the laws about dementia and driving?

State laws vary regarding when a person with Alzheimer's should stop driving. Some states will automatically revoke a license when a person is diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia. Other states may offer the chance for a diagnosed person to take and pass a driving test.

Many states require retaking a driving test when there is reason to believe someone may be unable to safely operate their vehicle. Information on unsafe driving can come from law enforcement, medical personnel, concerned citizens, and family members. Check with your state's department of motor vehicles for more information.

What to do when driving becomes unsafe

If you notice unsafe driving, you will need to take steps to keep the person from driving. It is always a tough conversation, and it's important to do it in a caring way. Try to understand how unhappy they may be to admit they have reached this new stage.

Here are some ways to help stop people with Alzheimer's from driving:

- Try talking about your concerns with the person. Find [tips on talking with someone about no longer driving](#).
- Take them to get a driving test.
- [Ask the person's doctor](#) to tell them to stop driving. The doctor can write "Do not drive" on a prescription pad and you can show this to the person.
- If necessary, hide the car keys, disable the car, move it out of sight, or consider selling it.

Finding other transportation options

Losing the ability to drive can be difficult, but driving is only one form of transportation. Consider finding other ways that the person with Alzheimer's can travel safely on their own.

Your local Area Agency on Aging can help you find local services that may include free or low-cost buses, taxis, or carpools for older people. Call **800-677-1116** or search the Eldercare Locator online. You also can try searching Rides in Sight or calling **855-607-4337**, a service of the nonprofit ITN America that provides information about transportation options for older adults.

Some churches and community groups have volunteers who take older adults where they want to go. Family and friends are another great resource.

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For more information about driving safety and dementia

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

adear@nia.nih.gov

www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

Alzheimers.gov

www.alzheimers.gov

Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

202-638-5944

info@aaafoundation.org

<https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/senior-driver-safety-mobility>

www.aaafoundation.org

AARP

888-687-2277

877-434-7598 (TTY)

member@aarp.org

www.aarp.org/auto/driver-safety

American Occupational Therapy Association

301-652-6611

www.aota.org

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

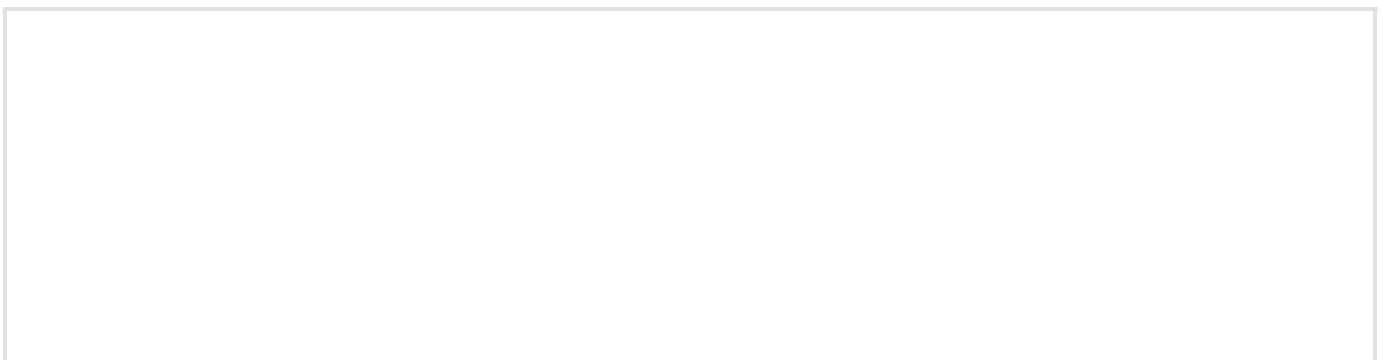
eldercarelocator@n4a.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

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