

When It is Time to Stop Driving

Warning Signs to Limit or Stop Driving

- Feeling uncomfortable and nervous while driving
- Dents and scrapes on the car or on fences, mailboxes, garage doors, curbs and such
- Difficulty staying in the lane of travel
- Getting lost
- Trouble paying attention to signals, road signs and pavement markings
- Slower response time to unexpected situations
- Medical conditions or medications that may be effecting the ability to handle the car safely
- Frequent "close calls" or almost having an accident
- Trouble judging gaps in traffic at intersections and on highway entrance/exit ramps
- Other drivers honking at the driver or the driver becoming angry at other drivers
- Friends or relatives not wanting the driver to drive them
- Difficulty seeing the sides of the road when looking straight ahead
- Having a hard time concentrating while driving
- Unable to turn around when reversing or changing lanes
- Frequent traffic tickets or "warnings" by law enforcement officers

If the driver has any of the warning the driving should be assessed by a professional. The driver should also attend a driver refresher class designed for seniors. Consult the driver's doctor if there are unusual concentration or memory problems, or other physical symptoms that may be influencing the ability to drive.

How Can I Help Someone Else Limit or Stop Driving?

Most drivers monitor themselves and gradually limit driving when driving in general is not safe. However, some drivers fail to recognize declining abilities, or they fear not driving because it will cause permanent dependence on others, in addition it may reduce social and leisure activities. Conditions such as dementia or early stages of Alzheimer's disease may cause drivers to be unable to evaluate their driving properly.

Step 1 – Assess the situation by looking for the warning signs when a passenger with the driver.

Step 2 – Begin having driving conversations with the driver. As people age they tend to look to family members for candid advice concerning their well-being and health issues. Have conversations early and often. Start the conversation out of a sincere sense of caring for the person's well-being based on the cited warning signs.

Step 3 – Suggest various options. **One size does not fit all.** No longer driving may be the only answer in some cases, however for others suddenly no longer driving may cause a person's overall health to decline prematurely.

Step 4 – If the person is not taking proper action in response to the concerns and the impairment is increasingly obvious, it may be necessary to involve the driver's doctor. In addition to family members, a family doctor is often the most trusted person for providing advice on health issues that may affect driving. Study resources on Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and driving.

Options Assisting the Driver to Limit Driving or to Stop Driving

- A classroom refresher course such as the AARP Driver Safety Program
- Order the AARP Driver Assessment Guide, "Older Driver Skill Assessment and Resource Guide: Creating Mobility Choices."
- Seek additional information from Web sites on topics such as behind-the-wheel assessment, counseling from private or public sources, remedial training, and/or adaptive equipment from an occupational therapist.
- Limit driving to certain times of day and familiar areas.
- Encourage the driver to consider using other methods of transportation such as rides from family and friends, public transportation, paratransit services, taxis or other transportation options in your community. Accompany the person during initial trials of alternate forms of transportation.
- The State Department of Motor Vehicles may have programs to evaluate individual driving abilities or may offer special licensing alternatives. Contact the state for more information.