

Dementia and Driving: Information for Caregivers

Is it ok for people with dementia to drive?

It depends. Driving is one of the most complicated activities we do. Driving safely requires many skills, including the following.

- Paying attention
- Remembering and following rules of the road
- Ability to react fast
- Remembering directions to various locations and adjusting your driving depending on traffic, detours, road construction, bad weather, etc.
- Anticipating where you need to be on the road - for example, being in the correct lane to make a turn

Many older adults, and especially people with dementia, lose these skills over time. There are tests that can be done in the doctor or health provider's office that can help decide if it is safe for a person to drive. There are also several driving testing programs available that can help an older adult, as well as any person with dementia, determine if they can safely drive.

Tips for talking about driving with someone who has dementia

- Focus on safety. Bring up the need to keep themselves and other people safe.
- Start talking about driving before they actually need to stop driving.
- Include the person with dementia in the decision-making process.
- Ask the doctor or health care provider for help.
- Maybe the car can be given to a relative who really needs a car.

Many people see driving as a sign of independence and do not understand how they will live without their car. It may take the person time to adjust. Be aware of their feelings. Remember that the safety of the person with dementia, as well as the public are very important concerns. The decision should not be delayed too long.

How can I provide transportation for the person with dementia who can no longer drive safely?

Work with the person with dementia and make a list of places they want to go.

- Ask friends and family to drive the person with dementia.
- Think about using delivery services for groceries and medications.
- Consider driving services provided by community organizations, taxi, or ride sharing services.

Have questions? Ask your doctor or health provider at your next appointment.