

Dementia and Driving: When to Stop

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When should an individual with Alzheimer's disease stop driving? This question comes up often with caregivers and is one of the most difficult to answer. There is no clear cut answer because it varies from person to person. But keep in mind, that no matter how difficult it is to take away the driving privilege, safety must be your primary concern.

When a person's memory and cognitive skills become impaired, driving can be very dangerous for them and for others on the road. Often, caregivers will act as the "co-pilot" and give the person directions. Being the navigator is not enough. The driver must be able to operate the car safely, react to other cars, understand traffic signs and lights and follow the traffic laws. Caregivers need to closely watch their parent or spouse who has Alzheimer's to insure

it is still safe for them to drive.

Your spouse or parent should no longer drive if he/she:

- Gets lost in familiar places.
- Does not comprehend traffic lights or signs.
- Has poor judgment of distance. (turns too wide or too tight, or runs over curbs)
- Makes poor decisions in traffic. (does not yield right of way, changes lanes without looking or signaling, tailgates, slams on the brakes)
- Drives too slow or too fast.
- Becomes easily confused or agitated while driving.
- Takes too long to come back from a familiar shopping trip.
- Confuses the brake and gas pedals.
- Doesn't react, or reacts too slowly to

emergencies.

- Can no longer drive defensively or anticipate potential dangerous situations.
- Has scrapes or dents on the car, garage or mailbox.
- Slows down or stops in traffic for no reason.
- Has difficulty processing multiple stimuli (observing signals, pedestrians, construction, signs, other cars, etc simultaneously.)

For more information on driving with dementia:

A Practical Guide to Alzheimer's Dementia and Driving produced by The Hartford:

<http://www.thehartford.com/alzheimers/>