

DEMENTIA AND DRIVING A DECISION AID



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INTRODUCTION

A diagnosis of dementia can come as quite a shock. It is accompanied by a variety of changes to one's lifestyle and needs. This booklet may be used by any driver who has dementia.

Most older adults have driven safely and remained crash free for many years. Unfortunately, dementia can silently disrupt driving skills. At times, family members notice unsafe driving behaviour before you do. For a variety of reasons, the issue of driving safety is often not raised by doctors, nurses, family or friends.

The aim of this booklet is to assist you in deciding when to stop driving after receiving a diagnosis of dementia. This booklet is intended to be used by consumers but family caregivers and practitioners will also find it useful when helping people with dementia consider driving retirement. It is hoped that early planning for retirement from driving will avoid the need to suddenly stop driving.

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INSTRUCTIONS

- Please read this booklet from beginning to end
- You will be guided through 4 steps
- Use a pencil to answer questions
- Check these green boxes if you agree
- Please write your answers on the dotted lines -----
- You may reuse this booklet as often as you wish

STEP 1



**TO HELP
CLARIFY MY
DECISION**

What is dementia?

Usually, dementia is a condition which gradually disrupts one's memory, speech, concentration, judgement and ability to plan. The most common forms of dementia are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body disease and Frontotemporal dementia. Approximately eleven per cent of people aged 65 and over in the U.S. have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. Dementia is associated with many other conditions and medication use. Some forms of dementia increase your risk of seizures and strokes.

Can dementia affect my driving skills?

Yes. Eventually, most people with dementia become unsafe to drive. Driving is a complex task. In order to drive safely, you rely upon a variety of skills such as judgement, memory, attention and the ability to assess your surroundings. Unfortunately, people with dementia often lose these important skills. For many, this happens without you realising it. Over time, your risk of becoming lost or having a car crash rises significantly.

What are my options?

- **Continue driving with no change**
- **Stop driving now**
- **Drive less**
- **Stop driving later**

How far along am I with making a decision about driving?

- I have not yet thought about my options
- I am thinking about my options
- I have almost made my decision
- I have already made my decision

How will I cope without my car?

People with dementia wish to drive for a number of reasons: the pleasure of driving; independence; shopping; work; visiting family or friends; going to appointments and traveling. Many are afraid to discuss driving safety for fear of losing their license.

Fortunately, there are alternatives I can consider

- **Family or friends giving me a ride**
- **Use public, community or volunteer transport:**
Buses, trains, ferries, subway, hospital shuttles, religious groups or senior vans.

- **Private transport:** Hire a driver or helper. Taxis (subsidies may be available). Rideshare services like Uber.
- **Use the internet for online shopping or communicating with family and friends**
- **Get active:** Walk or ride a bicycle.
- **Relocate or move home:** Living closer to a town center.
- **More hobby time maintaining and fixing bikes and cars**

Many people underestimate how much money they could save by retiring from driving. One no longer needs to pay for annual registration, car insurance, maintenance checks, repairs and ever increasing fuel costs.

What warning signs of unsafe driving have I noticed?

Driving errors are a sign that your driving skills may no longer be safe. Have you experienced any of the following warning signs while driving?



Changing lanes difficult to do



Crossroads or traffic lights difficult to use



Drive very slowly



Confuse left and right

- Become lost on short trips
- Drive on the wrong side of the road
- Notice damage to my car that I cannot explain
- Car accident or a near miss
- Traffic fine or penalty

How often do I experience these warning signs?

- Never
- Once before
- A few times in a month
- Every week



STEP 2



**WHAT DO I
NEED TO MAKE
MY DECISION?**

Support

- **Do I have enough help or advice from others to make a choice?**

Yes No

- **Am I being forced by others to make a choice?**

Yes No

Knowledge

- **Do I know my options?**

Yes No

- **Do I know the benefits and risks of each option?**

Yes No

Values

- **Am I clear about which benefits and risks matter most to me?**

Yes No

Certainty

- **Do I feel sure about the best choice for me?**

Yes No

Keep reading for further guidance.



STEP 3



**WEIGHING
MY OPTIONS**

Support

- **Who else is involved with my decisions about driving?**

- **What option does this person prefer?**

- No change Stop driving now
- Drive less Stop driving later

- **Is this person pressuring me?**

- Yes No

- **Can this person help me?**

- Yes No

- **What do I prefer?**

- I prefer to decide for myself
- I prefer to let someone else decide
- I prefer to share the decision with others

Knowledge

Most experts would agree that drivers with dementia are at a higher risk of getting lost or having a car crash. Some researchers have found the risk of crash to be 2.5 to 10 times higher than other people of the same age. This is a difficult topic to research and your exact risk is uncertain.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DRIVING?

- Independence
- Pleasure of driving
- Visiting family and friends
- Going to appointments

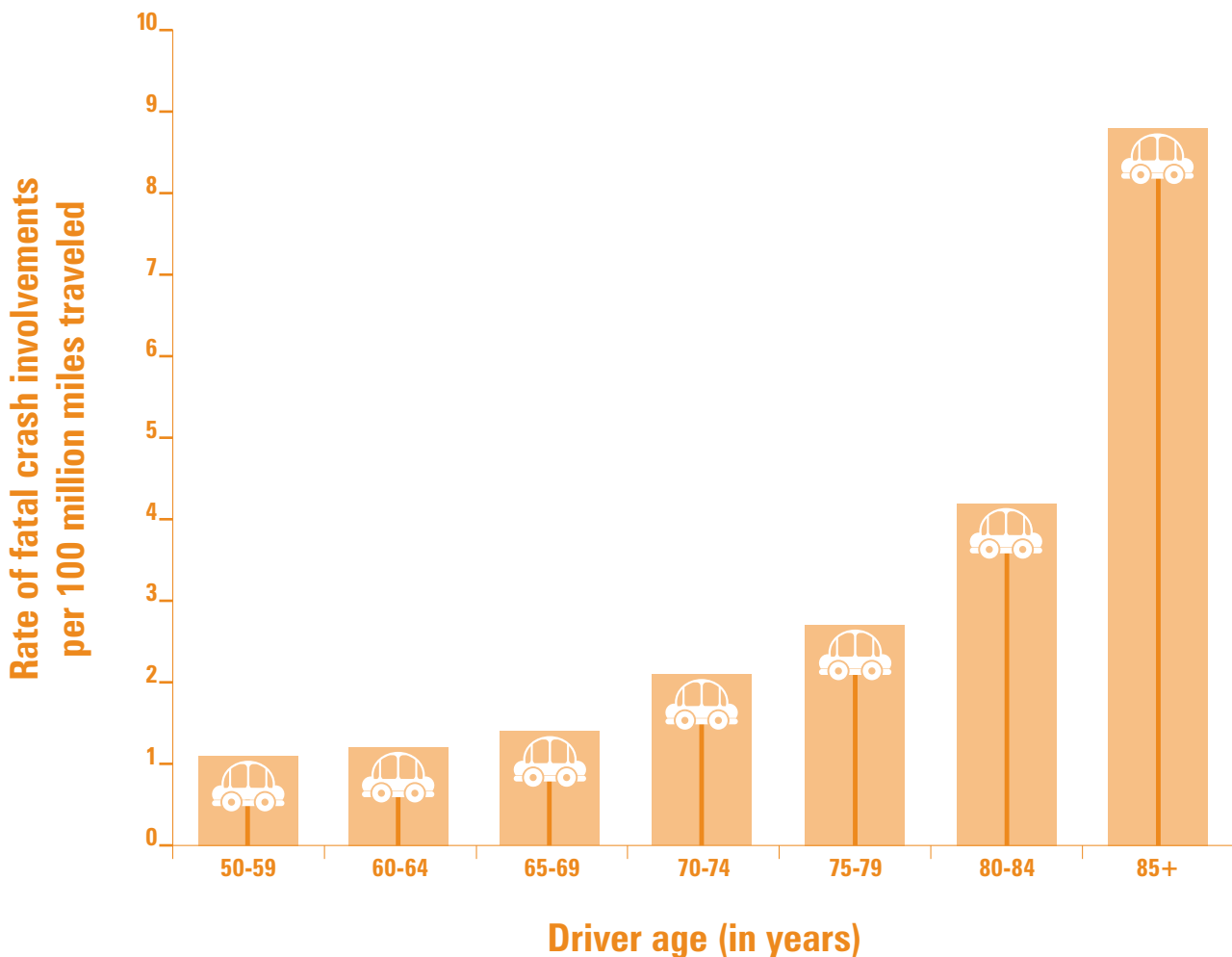
WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF DRIVING?

- Becoming lost
- Car crash
- Personal injury
- Injury to others

Does my risk change over time?

Yes, it does. Your driving skills will worsen over time. Your risk of serious injury or death following a car crash rises as you get older. This bar chart shows the number of drivers who are involved in fatal car crashes according to age. Drivers with dementia are estimated to be at an even higher risk (up to 10 times greater).

Passenger vehicle fatal crash involvement per 100 million miles traveled by driver age



What are the recommendations?

The American Geriatrics Society and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration say:

- **Some drivers with dementia are competent to drive in the early stages.**
- **When individual driving ability poses a heightened risk to self or others, driving privileges need to be withheld.**

The Alzheimer's Association say:

- **A diagnosis of dementia does not necessarily mean an immediate loss of driving privileges.**
- **It is important to plan ahead for driving retirement.**

Contact your state licensing agency for information.



The most important reason for me to continue driving is ...

- Independence
- Pleasure of driving
- Visiting family
- Visiting friends
- Going to appointments
- Traveling to new places
- Going to place of worship
- Shopping
- Poor access to public transport
- Other _____

Of all the items on this page - the single most important reason for me to stop driving is ...

- Risk of getting lost
- Risk of a car crash
- Risk of injury to me
- Risk of injury to others
- Crash leading to death
- Worried family
- Worried friends
- Other -----

Of all the items on this page - the most important to me is ...

STEP 4



WHAT NEXT?

Support

If you feel you do not have enough support to make a decision you can seek additional support from others. Who do you prefer to speak to? You can use this later to remind you.

- My family practitioner or specialist**
- Spiritual guide**
- A nurse or someone else from the medical profession**
- My family**
- My friends**
- Clergy**
- Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline: [1 800 272 3900](tel:18002723900)**



Knowledge

If you feel you do not have enough information to make a decision, you can seek additional information from others.

Who do you prefer to ask for information? You can use this later to remind you.



My family practitioner or specialist



My local library



**Alzheimer's Association www.alz.org
24/7 Helpline **1 800 272 3900****



Driving Evaluations

American Occupational Therapy Association
www.aota.org

Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists
www.aded.net



Transport Options

Eldercare www.eldercare.gov

Rides in Sight www.ridesinsight.org

Values

Here are a few tips on how to clarify the values that mean the most to you. You may choose as many of these options as you wish:

- **Talk to others who have made the decision**
- **Discuss with others what matters most to me**
- **Consider joining a local support group**
- **Details available from Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline 1 800 272 3900**

Questions

What questions need answering to help you decide?
You might want to show these to other people, such as your family practitioner, specialist, family or friends. Discussing this booklet with others can often be very helpful.

1. -----

2. -----

3. -----

By using this booklet I have now considered

- **How dementia affects my driving skills**
- **My options regarding driving**
- **What I have noticed about my own driving**
- **What support I have**
- **The reasons for and against me driving**
- **Where I can go for more information or support**

Decision

Having read this booklet, have you reached a decision about driving? What have you decided?



I will continue driving with no change



I will stop driving now



I will drive less



I will stop driving later



I am unsure

THE NEXT STEP

Arrange an appointment with your family practitioner, specialist, nurse or someone else who can help you discuss this further. You may find it helpful to bring this booklet with you. Please reuse this booklet as often as you wish.



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MISCELLANEOUS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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DISCLAIMER

This booklet is not intended to replace the advice of your family practitioner, specialist or health professional. All efforts have been taken to ensure the content of this booklet is accurate at the time of publication.

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