

# Driving and Alzheimer's Disease

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**You have been a safe driver for years. For you, driving means freedom and control. As you get older, changes in your body and your mind can affect how safely you drive.**

**Millions of people have Alzheimer's disease. If you or someone you know has Alzheimer's, talk with your family and your health care provider about it and how this disease can affect your driving safety.**

## How Can Alzheimer's Affect the Way I Drive?

Below are early warning signs that Alzheimer's may be affecting your driving safety.

- Need more help with directions or with learning a new driving route.
- Trouble remembering where you are going.
- Forget where you parked your car.
- Trouble making turns, especially left turns.
- Misjudge gaps in traffic at street crossings and on highway ramps.
- Trouble seeing or following traffic lights and road signs.
- Get traffic citations or "warnings".
- Drivers often honk their horns at you.
- Stop at a green light, or hit your brakes at the wrong time.
- Trouble staying in your driving lane.
- Less muscle control. Hard to push down on pedals or turn steering wheel.
- Find dents and scrapes you cannot explain on your car, fences, mailboxes, garage doors, and curbs.
- Other people question if you are driving safely.
- Cannot control your anger, sadness, or other emotions that can affect your driving.

## What Should I Do if I Have Any of These Signs?

As soon as you notice one or more of these warning signs:

- Tell your family or someone close.
- See your health care provider.

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## What Can I Do When Alzheimer's Affects My Driving Safety?

You need to understand how this disease can affect your driving. Your health care provider may suggest that you see two types of specialists that can help you:

- **A *driver rehabilitation specialist*** can test how well you drive on and off the road. This specialist also can help you decide when you need to stop driving. To find a driver rehabilitation specialist, go to [www.aota.org/olderdriver](http://www.aota.org/olderdriver). Under "Driving & Community Mobility," click the button in the center of the page marked "Search for a Driver Rehabilitation Specialist." This will link you to a national database. There you can search for names and addresses of driver rehabilitation specialists in your area.
- **An *occupational therapist with special training in driving skills assessment and remediation***. To find an occupational therapist, contact local hospitals and rehabilitation facilities.

## What Can I Do If I Have To Limit or Stop Driving?

Even if you have to limit or give up driving, you can stay active and do the things you like to do.

**First, plan ahead.** Talk with family and friends about how you can shift from driver to passenger. Below are some ways to get where you want to go and see the people you want to see.

- Rides with family and friends.
- Taxis.
- Shuttle buses or vans.
- Public buses, trains, and subways.
- Walking.
- Para transit services (special transportation services for people with disabilities). Some offer door-to-door service.

**Take someone with you.** You may want to have a family member or friend go with you when you use public transportation or when you walk. Having someone with you can help you get where you want to go without confusion.

**Find out about transportation services in your area.** Many community-based volunteer programs offer free or low-cost ways to get around.

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**Consider using an emergency response service.** The MedicAlert + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return program is a 24-hour national emergency response service for people with Alzheimer's who wander or have a medical emergency. To learn more about this program, call 888-572-8566, or go to [www.alz.org/SafeReturn](http://www.alz.org/SafeReturn).

## Where Can I Get Help With Transportation?

To find transportation services in your area, visit [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov) or call the national ElderCare Locator at **800-677-1116**, and ask for your local Office on Aging.

If you have a disability, check out Easter Seals Project ACTION at [www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org), or call **800-659-6428**. This project works to give people with disabilities more ways to get around.

## Where Can I Learn More About Alzheimer's Disease?

First, talk with your health care provider.

For more information, contact:

- **ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION:** [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org), 800-272-3900
- **ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE EDUCATION AND REFERRAL (ADEAR) CENTER:** a service of the National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health. Go to [www.alzheimers.org](http://www.alzheimers.org), and type "ADEAR" in the custom search section.
- **NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING,** National Institutes of Health: [www.nihseniorhealth.gov](http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov)
  - » To order a free copy of *Age Page on Older Drivers*, call the National Institute on Aging at 800-222-2225, or go to [www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/older-drivers](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/older-drivers).
- **NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS AND STROKE:** National Institutes of Health: [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov), 301-496-5721, 800-352-9424
- **NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION:** 888-327-4236, [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)

**Always Wear Your Seat Belt.  
Do Not Use Your Cell Phone While Driving.**