

Driving When You Have Cataracts

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

Eyesight often gets worse as you age. Eye diseases, such as cataracts, are more common in older people. Cataracts cause the lens in the eye to become dull and blurry. Cataracts form slowly and create few problems at first, but can make your vision change over time.

How Can Cataracts Affect the Way I Drive?

Cataracts can make it harder for you to see the road, street signs, lane markers, and even people and bicyclists in the road. Here are some warning signs:

- Difficulty seeing clearly at dawn, dusk, and at night.
- Sunlight may seem too bright.
- Night driving is harder due to glare from car headlights.
- Colors look faded.
- Seeing double images in one eye.
- Sudden changes in prescriptions for your eyeglasses or contact lenses.

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 to you.
- See your eye health care provider. A small change in your eyeglass prescription may help you see better while driving.

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What Can I Do When Cataracts Affect My Driving Safety?

Your eye health care provider may want you to have cataract surgery. It depends on how serious the changes are in your vision. But before you have surgery, your provider may refer you to two types of specialists who can help you.

- **A *driver rehabilitation specialist*** can test how well you drive on and off the road. This specialist also may offer training to help improve your driving skills, and keep you and others safe on the road. To find a driver rehabilitation specialist, go to 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 local driver rehabilitation specialists.
- **An *occupational therapist with special training in driving skills assessment and remediation***. To find an occupational therapist, contact local hospitals and rehabilitation centers.

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.

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Find out about transportation services in your area. Some areas offer low-cost bus or taxi service for older people. Many community-based volunteer programs offer free or low-cost transportation.

Where Can I Get Help With Transportation?

To find transportation services in your area, visit 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 or call **800-659-6428**. This project works with the transportation industry and the disability community to give people with disabilities more ways to get around.

Where Can I Learn More About Cataracts?

First, talk with your eye health care provider.

For more information, contact:

- **AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION:** www.aoa.org, 800-365-2219
- **AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY:** www.aaopt.org, 415-561-8500
- **NATIONAL EYE INSTITUTE:** www.nei.nih.gov, 301-496-5248
- **NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING**, National Institutes of Health:
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.
- **NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION:**
888-327-4236, www.nhtsa.gov

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