

Do You Have Concerns About an Older Driver?

Are you worried about an older family member or friend driving? Sometimes, it can be hard for an older person to realize that he or she is no longer a safe driver. You might want to observe the person's driving skills.

If it's not possible to observe the older person driving, look out for these signs:

- Multiple vehicle crashes, "near misses," and/or new dents in the car
- Two or more traffic tickets or warnings within the last 2 years; increases in car insurance premiums because of driving issues
- Comments from neighbors or friends about driving
- Anxiety about driving at night
- Health issues that might affect driving ability, including problems with vision, hearing, and/or movement
- Complaints about the speed, sudden lane changes, or actions of other drivers
- Recommendations from a doctor to modify driving habits or quit driving entirely

Having "The Talk" About Driving

Talking with an older person about his or her driving is often difficult. Here are some things that might help when having the talk.

- **Be prepared.** Learn about local services to help someone who can no longer drive. Identify the person's transportation needs.
- **Avoid confrontation.** Use "I" messages rather than "You" messages. For example, say, "I am concerned about your safety when you are driving," rather than, "You're no longer a safe driver."
- **Stick to the issue.** Discuss the driver's skills, not his or her age.
- **Focus on safety and maintaining independence.** Be clear that the goal is for the older driver to continue the activities he or she currently enjoys while staying safe. Offer to help the person stay independent. For example, you might say, "I'll help you figure out how to get where you want to go if driving isn't possible."
- **Be positive and supportive.** Recognize the importance of a driver's license to the older person. Understand that he or she may become defensive, angry, hurt, or withdrawn. You might say: "I understand that this may be upsetting," or "We'll work together to find a solution."

Is It Time to Give Up Driving?

We all age differently. For this reason, there is no way to set one age when everyone should stop driving. So, how do you know if you should stop? To help decide, ask yourself:

- Do other drivers often honk at me?
- Have I had some accidents, even if they were only "fender benders"?
- Do I get lost, even on roads I know?
- Do cars or people walking seem to appear out of nowhere?
- Do I get distracted while driving?
- Have family, friends, or my doctor said they're worried about my driving?
- Am I driving less these days because I'm not as sure about my driving as I used to be?

- Do I have trouble staying in my lane?
- Do I have trouble moving my foot between the gas and the brake pedals, or do I sometimes confuse the two?
- Have I been pulled over by a police officer about my driving?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, it may be time to talk with your doctor about driving or have a driving assessment.

How Will You Get Around?

Are you worried you won't be able to do the things you want and need to do if you stop driving? Many people have this concern, but there may be more ways to get around than you think. For example, there are low-cost bus or taxi services for older people [where eligible]. Some communities groups, such as Sunassist offer a carpool service or scheduled trips to the grocery store, mall, or doctor's office.

It costs a lot to own a car. If you don't have to make car payments or pay for insurance, maintenance, petrol, oil, or other car expenses, then you may be able to afford to take taxis or other public transportation. You can also buy petrol for friends or family members who give you rides.