

DRIVING AND DEMENTIA

FACTS

- People with memory disorders are at a greater risk of unsafe driving compared to those of the same age without memory concerns.
- Changes in vision, hearing, mobility, and reflexes along with taking some medications increase the risk of accidents.
- Frequent evaluation of risk with driving is essential.
- Early intervention can help prevent a catastrophe.
- Most people reach a point in life when driving is no longer safe.
- It is a civic duty to protect the health and welfare of the driver, other drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and property.

INDICATORS OF RISK

- Getting lost while driving
- Passengers are fearful of riding with the driver
- Not staying in the lane
- Confusing brake and gas pedals
- Failing to observe traffic signs and signals
- Hitting a curb when driving
- Driving too slowly or speeding
- Becoming angry or confused when driving

QUESTIONS TO ASK ONESELF ABOUT DRIVING SAFETY

- Has my confidence surrounding driving decreased?
- Have I had any fender benders, car scrapes, or accidents?

- Have I had any traffic citations?
- Have I gotten lost or disoriented as to where I am when driving?
- Have I forgotten where I am going?
- Has my mental processing speed slowed?
- Has my vision or visual perception changes?
- Have my movements slowed?

QUESTIONS OTHERS CAN ASK ABOUT SOMEONE'S DRIVING SAFETY

- Do you have concerns about riding with the driver?
- Would you let children ride with the person?
- Do they need a “co-pilot” to assist with driving?
- Do they have increased anger or anxiety when driving?
- Are traffic rules obeyed?
- Is there difficulty seeing other vehicles, objects, or pedestrians?
- Can the car be parked correctly?
- Have other instrumental activities of daily living declined such as paying bills or preparing meals?
- Are mood swings, difficulty problem solving, or impaired decision- making present?

EARLY STRATEGIES

- Many people are fit to drive provided early safety strategies are put in place.
- Drive in familiar areas only within a small radius of the home. If a GPS is required, then it is not a familiar area.
- Drive only during the daytime in good weather conditions.
- As much as possible make right turns only. If left turns are needed always make them at a traffic light.

- Avoid highways.
- Do not accelerate into a line of stopped cars to avoid abrupt stopping.
- Keep to the speed limit and do not exceed it.
- Avoid distractions such as pets, phones, and car's sound system.
- Evaluate the current vehicle and consider replacing with a model that has advanced safety features such as lane assist and blind spot indicators.

STRATEGIES USED AS CONCERNS PROGRESS

- Using these strategies can help transition someone from driving to no longer doing so.
- Some individuals are relieved they no longer have the stress of driving.
- Loss of driving is associated with feelings of loss of independence, loss of socialization, and low self-esteem. Discuss strategies to maintain independence around driving such as helping to make other arrangements. Create new ways to promote socialization.
- No longer driving may result in a grief response – anger, denial, bargaining, and depression. Allow the person to express feelings and move to resolution of the grief – acceptance.
- Offer to drive, allowing the person to relax and enjoy the scenery or avoid the stress of driving in traffic.
- Schedule family or friends to visit either at home or by taking the person somewhere for a meal or an outing.
- Use transport services or hire a driver.
- Use home delivery services and on-line shopping.
- Use more in-home services.
- Watch the website video “The Driving Conversation” for more information.
- If driving fitness is questioned and the driver will not voluntarily stop, a formal driving evaluation can be ordered by the provider.
- Depending on the outcome, driving privileges may be suspended.
- Read the document on the website “Driving Evaluation” for more information.

STRATEGIES USED WHEN DRIVING MUST IMMEDIATELY BE STOPPED

- If driving is dangerous and must be immediately stopped, critical steps must be undertaken.
- Disable the vehicle by removing the battery.
- Remove the car keys with non-working keys or remotes with the battery removed.
- Remove or sell the car.