

Safety is likely the top concern for the family of an older adult, but for the older adult driving is the ultimate symbol of independence and control. They are accustomed to the freedom driving brings to their life. The strategies and resources provided here will support the success of conversations around if and/or when an older adult should modify their driving or stop driving altogether.

Timing regarding conversations with an older adult about driving

According to Medicare.org, you may want to have a conversation with an older adult about their driving if they:

- Have been in a recent car accident
- Experienced a close call
- Ran a red light
- Received a ticket for a driving violation
- Are speeding or driving too slow
- Are having problems with memory loss
- Are taking medications that may affect their driving, such as anti-anxiety drugs, narcotics, and sleeping pills
- Are having problems with hearing or eyesight
- Have a medical condition that has progressed to the point in which their driving is impaired such as Alzheimer's Disease, arthritis, cataracts, diabetes, glaucoma, muscular degeneration, Parkinson's disease, sleep apnea, or have had a stroke

Additionally, (if you haven't already) be a passenger in their car and if you don't feel safe while the older adult is driving then it's time to talk to them about making changes.

If you are unsure if it's the right time to pursue the modifying or stopping of the older adult's driving, AARP's [We Need to Talk Seminar](#) is a valuable resource. Additionally, if the older adult is interested in completing an independent assessment, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has a [self-assessment questionnaire](#) that may highlight potentially problematic symptoms that could affect their driving abilities.

Consider driving modifications and safety measures

- Would they agree to driving within a certain radius of their home, avoiding the freeway or only driving during daylight hours?
- Would a new hearing aid or new prescription glasses make a difference in their driving safety?
- Do they have a friend who could drive with them to be an extra set of eyes and ears?
- AARP offers reasonably priced on-line or in person [safety courses](#) that may allow the older adult to extend time driving, while still being safe.
- Review state laws for driver's license extensions through the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety list](#) which shows state requirements for elderly driver testing. The DMV tests may include eye tests, reaction tests or road tests.

If stronger interventions are needed

Lastly, if the older adult is a danger to themselves and others and all efforts have been made to have the older adult stop driving on their own volition, consider the following approaches:

- **Involve the older adult's doctor**
The doctor may make a referral to an Optometrist or recommend or flat out stipulate that they not drive since some states actually have physician reporting requirements if they feel it is medically unsafe for the person to drive.
- **Have an evaluation by a certified driver rehabilitation specialist (CDRS)**
Use the [DCRS directory](#) to find a specialist to evaluate their driving abilities. The specialist won't hesitate to recommend driving cessation if they believe a driver is no longer safe. Additionally, they won't tell an older person to stop driving if it's not warranted.
- **Make the car unavailable**
Sometimes creative approaches are effective, such as making the car unavailable by unhooking the battery, having a friend or family member "borrow" the car for an unlimited amount of time or "losing" the keys. This strategy may be especially useful for older adults suffering from memory loss.
- **Anonymously report them to the DMV**
The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) allows people to report unsafe drivers, often anonymously. A DMV representative will then contact the older adult and request a medical evaluation, possibly including a driving test. Depending on the findings, their license may be restricted or revoked altogether.