

Canada

DEMENTIA AND DRIVING A DECISION AID



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

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INTRODUCTION

A diagnosis of dementia can come as quite a shock. It is accompanied by a variety of changes to one's lifestyle and needs. This booklet may be used by any driver who has dementia.

Most older adults have driven safely without having a vehicle collision for many years. Unfortunately, dementia can silently disrupt driving skills. As dementia progresses, there will be a time when you will need to stop driving. At times, family members notice unsafe driving behaviour before you do. For a variety of reasons, the issue of driving safety is often not raised by doctors, nurses, family or friends.

The aim of this booklet is to assist you in deciding when to stop driving after receiving a diagnosis of dementia. This booklet is intended to be used by drivers with dementia, but family carers and health professionals will also find it useful when helping people with dementia consider giving up driving. It is hoped that early planning will avoid the need to suddenly stop driving without strategies in place for how to remain mobile.

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INSTRUCTIONS

- We strongly encourage you to consider working through this booklet with a family member or friend.
- Please read this booklet from beginning to end.
- You will be guided through 4 steps.
- You may reuse this booklet as often as you wish.

STEP 1



**TO HELP ME
DECIDE
WHEN IT IS
TIME TO STOP
DRIVING**

What is dementia?

Dementia is a condition that usually disrupts one's memory, speech, concentration, judgment and ability to plan, in a gradual fashion. The most common forms of dementia are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body disease and Frontotemporal dementia. It is estimated that by 2030, the number of Canadians with dementia will increase to 990,600 people and by 2050 to 1.7 million people.

Can dementia affect my driving skills?

Yes. Eventually, most people with dementia become unsafe to drive. Driving is a complex task. In order to drive safely, you rely upon a variety of skills such as judgment, memory, attention and the ability to assess your surroundings. Unfortunately, people with dementia often lose these important skills. For many, this happens without you realizing it. Over time, your risk of becoming lost or having a vehicle collision rises significantly.

What are my options?

- **Continue driving**
- **Drive less**
- **Stop driving later**
- **Stop driving now**

Consider these options while reading through the decision aid.

How far along am I with making a decision about driving?

Check the box that is the best answer.

- ☐ I have not yet thought about my options
- ☐ I am thinking about my options
- ☐ I have almost made my decision
- ☐ I have already made my decision

What warning signs of unsafe driving have I noticed?

Driving errors are a sign that your driving skills may no longer be safe. Have you experienced any of the following warning signs while driving? Check all the boxes that apply to you.

- ☐ Changing lanes is difficult to do
- ☐ Finding traffic lights and crosswalks confusing
- ☐ Driving very slowly or too fast
- ☐ Confusing left and right
- ☐ Having difficulty making left hand turns against oncoming traffic

- ☐ **Becoming lost on short trips**
- ☐ **Driving on the wrong side of the road**
- ☐ **Noticing damage to my car that I cannot explain**
- ☐ **Having a vehicle collision or a near miss**
- ☐ **Receiving a traffic ticket**

How often do I experience these warning signs?

Check the box that is the best answer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Only once |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A few times in a month | <input type="checkbox"/> Every week |



How will I cope without my car?

People wish to drive for a number of reasons: the pleasure of driving; independence; shopping; work; visiting family or friends; going to appointments and traveling. Many people with dementia are afraid to discuss driving safety for fear of losing their license.

There are alternatives I can consider:

- **Family or friends giving me a ride.**
- **Use public (if possible), community or volunteer transport:** Buses, trains, ferries, subways, shuttles, religious groups or senior vans.
- **Private transport:** Hire a driver or helper. Taxis (subsidies may be available), Uber, Lyft.
- **Use the internet for online shopping or communicating with family and friends.**
- **Get active:** Walk or ride a bicycle when it is safe.
- **Relocate or move your home:** Live closer to a town center.
- **Find activities that are close to your home.**

Many people underestimate how much money they could save by giving up driving. One no longer needs to pay for annual registration, car insurance, maintenance checks, repairs and ever increasing fuel costs.

STEP 2



**WHAT DO I
NEED TO MAKE
MY DECISION?**

Support

- Do I have enough help or advice from others to make a choice?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- Am I being forced by others to make a choice?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Knowledge

- Do I know my options?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- Do I know the benefits and risks of each option?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Values

- **Am I clear about which benefits and risks matter most to me?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Certainty

- **Do I feel sure about the best choice for me?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

Keep reading for further guidance.



STEP 3



WEIGHING MY OPTIONS

Support

- **Who else is involved with my decisions about driving?**

- **What option does this person prefer?**

☐

Continue driving with no change

☐

Stop driving later

☐

Continue driving with changes

☐

Stop driving now

- **Is this person pressuring me?**

☐

Yes

☐

No

- **Can this person help me?**

☐

Yes

☐

No

- **What do I prefer?**

☐

I prefer to decide for myself

☐

I prefer to let someone else decide

☐

I prefer to make the decision with others

Knowledge

Most experts would agree that drivers with dementia are at a higher risk of getting lost or having a vehicle collision. Some researchers have found the risk of a vehicle collision to be 2.5 to 10 times higher than other people of the same age. This is a difficult topic to research and the exact risk is uncertain.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DRIVING?

- Independence
- Pleasure of driving
- Visiting family and friends
- Going to appointments

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF DRIVING?

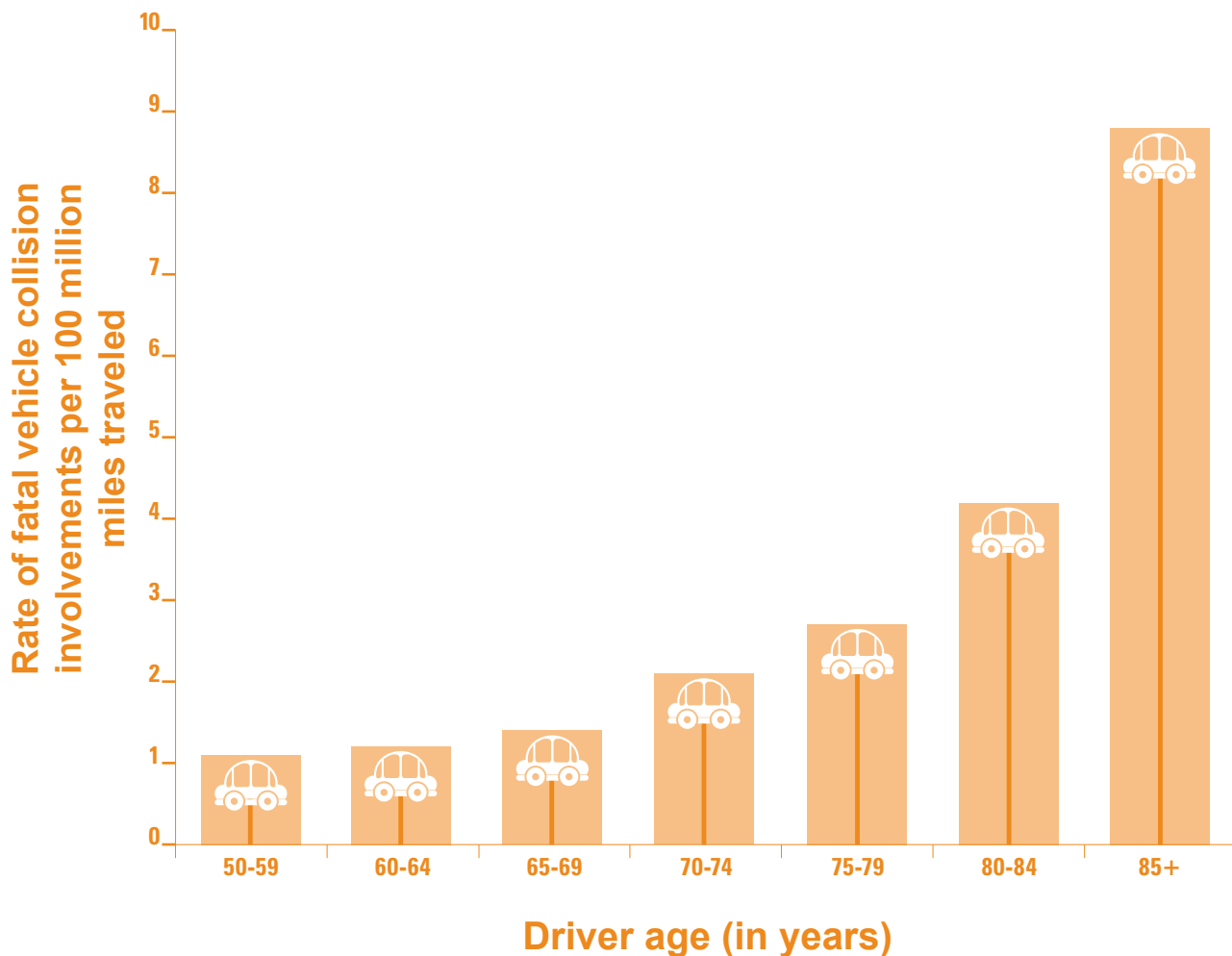
- Becoming lost
- Vehicle collision
- Personal injury or death
- Injury to others or death

Does my risk change over time?

Yes, it does. Your driving skills will worsen over time. Your risk of serious injury or death following a vehicle collision rises as you get older. This bar chart shows the number of drivers who are involved in fatal vehicle collisions according to age.

Drivers with dementia are estimated to be at an even higher risk.

Passenger vehicle fatal vehicle collision involvement per 100 million miles traveled by driver age



What are the recommendations?

- In the early stage of dementia plan for the time when you will need to stop driving.
- An on-road driving assessment will often be recommended if you want to continue driving.
- Discuss your concerns with your health professional and with family or friends.
- Create a plan with a family member or friend on how to get around when you are no longer driving.
It is important to look up your province's regulations about medical fitness to drive.



The most important reasons for me to continue driving are...

Check the boxes that you most agree with.

- ☐ Independence
- ☐ Pleasure of driving
- ☐ Visiting family
- ☐ Visiting friends
- ☐ Going to appointments
- ☐ Traveling to new places
- ☐ Going to a place of worship
- ☐ Going shopping
- ☐ Poor access to public transportation
- ☐ Going to social activities such as restaurants, movies and sporting events
- ☐ Other: _____

The most important reasons for me to stop driving are...

Check all the boxes that apply.

☐

Risk of getting lost

☐

Risk of a vehicle collision

☐

Risk of injury to me

☐

Risk of injury to others

☐

Risk of a vehicle collision leading to death

☐

Worried family

☐

Worried friends

☐

Other people who are worried

STEP 4



WHAT NEXT?

Support

If you feel you do not have enough support to make a decision, you can seek additional support from others. Who do you prefer to speak to? You can use this later to remind you.

☐

My family

☐

My friends

☐

My health professional

☐

Spiritual leader







☐

Other



Knowledge

If you feel you do not have enough information to make a decision, you can seek additional information. See below for some suggestions:

-  **Driving and Dementia Roadmap (DDR)**
(www.drivinganddementia.ca)
-  **My health professional**
-  **Alzheimer Society of Canada: www.alzheimer.ca or local Alzheimer Society organization**
-  **My local driving licensing authority**
-  **My local library**
-  **Call 211 for local, non-emergency services and programs, such as alternative transportation options.**

Values

Here are a few tips on how to clarify the values that mean the most to you. You may choose as many of these options as you wish:

- **Talk to others who have made the decision**
- **Discuss what matters most to me with others**
- **Consider joining a local support group**
- **Talk to someone from my local Alzheimer Society organization**

Questions

What questions need answering to help you decide? You might want to show this list to other people, such as your health professional, family or friends. Discussing this booklet with others can often be very helpful.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

By using this booklet I have now considered...

- How dementia affects my driving skills
- My options regarding driving
- What I have noticed about my own driving
- What support I have
- The reasons for and against me driving
- Where I can go for more information or support

Decision

Having read this booklet, have you reached a decision about driving? What have you decided?

☐

I will continue driving with no change

☐

I will stop driving now

☐

I will stop driving later

☐

I am unsure

THE NEXT STEP

Arrange an appointment with your health professional who can help you discuss this further. You may find it helpful to bring this booklet with you. Please reuse this booklet as often as you wish.



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Other references are available on request at www.adhere.org.au





MISCELLANEOUS

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Disclaimer:

This booklet is not intended to replace the advice of your health professional. All efforts have been taken to ensure the content of this booklet is accurate at the time of publication.

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