

## Dementia and Driving –General Fact Sheet

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*Of all the activities of daily life that are adversely affected by dementia, driving is potentially the deadliest*

### Did you know...

1. There is a 2 – 8 times greater risk of crashes for elderly drivers with mild to moderate dementia compared to those not demented
2. Because dementia affects your visual skills, and judgment only individuals with very mild dementia should be allowed to continue driving
3. It is estimated that by 2008, there will be more than 98,000 drivers in Ontario with dementia

### What is Dementia and how does it affect driving?

#### Dementia:

- ◆ A term used to classify a group of disorders that impairs a persons cognitive abilities: i.e., memory, judgment, language skills, behavior
- ◆ Represents a new onset of memory difficulties and other cognitive problems sever enough to interfere with daily life activities.
- ◆ Cognitive impairment is progressive and irreversible.
- ◆ Alzheimer's dementia is the most common cause of dementia

#### Alzheimer's disease affects the following skills necessary for driving:

- Impaired multi-tasking abilities,
- slowed reaction times
- impaired spatial skills / vision
- impaired judgment,
- and other cognitive deficits

### Does a Diagnosis of Alzheimer's mean I or my loved one must stop driving?

#### No, but here are the facts:

- ◆ In the early stages of dementia individuals may still be able to drive safely
- ◆ Everyone with Alzheimer's disease will eventually lose the ability to drive safely.

## **WARNING SIGNS: Ask yourself the following questions.**

1. Do you or would you feel comfortable being a passenger in the car when the person is driving?
2. In the last year has the person had any accidents or near misses or tickets for traffic violations (driving too slowly, failure to stop)?
3. Have you noticed the person self restricting their driving habits (driving less or only familiar routes, avoiding busy streets, or not driving in bad weather)
4. Do they rely on a co-pilot / passenger for directions, or to point out dangerous situations?
5. Have others commented on the persons unsafe driving or have you noticed that other drivers often honk horns while the person is driving?
6. Would you be concerned if the grandchildren were alone in the car with the person driving?

### **Immediately stop driving if:**

- ◆ **Confusing the gas and brake pedal**
- ◆ **Stopping in traffic for no apparent reason**

### **Keep in mind....**

- ◆ Raise the issue of driving cessation early, while the person is still able to make decisions about their driving future, such as selling their vehicle.
- ◆ The problem of driving cessation must not be ignored, even if the person is only traveling to the shops and back.
- ◆ Don't let a crash be the factor that finally puts a stop to driving.

## **Driving Related Resources for Senior Drivers**

- ◆ Canadian Safety Council – (613) 739 – 1535  
Website: [www.safetycouncil.org](http://www.safetycouncil.org)
- ◆ CAA – Canadian Automobile Association  
(613) 274 – 0117  
Website: [www.caa.ca](http://www.caa.ca)

To find out if your area has special transportation services for seniors:

- ◆ Seniors INFOline: 1(888) 910 – 1999

Information for license renewal for seniors over the age of 80:

- ◆ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Contact Centre at 416-235-2999 or toll free at 1-800-387-

### **"55 Alive" Program**

- ◆ A senior's only driver improvement program. "55 Alive" is available through safety organizations and various driving schools.

For more resources regarding dementia and driving contact:

- ◆ Phone the Alzheimer Society at 523-4004 and ask about First Link.

[www.alzheimerott.org/first\\_link](http://www.alzheimerott.org/first_link)

