

How to stay on the move if you don't drive?

Alternative transport options should be discussed and tried soon after the diagnosis, ideally before the person gives up driving. This helps to make the transition to other forms of transport smoother and can make the prospect of giving up driving less intimidating for the person and for carers.

Various modes of alternative transport and tips for providing transport for a person with dementia are described in detail in the extended version of this guide.

More information

The full version of this guide containing more detailed advice and support services can be obtained from the NRMA and Alzheimer's Australia.

NRMA

W: mynrma.com.au P: 131 122

Alzheimer's Australia

W: fightdementia.org.au P: 1800 100 500

Other useful contacts:

Community Transport Search

mynrma.com.au/living-well-navigator/getting-around

Translating and Interpreter Service

P: 131 450



NSW

Roads and Maritime Services

P: 132 213 W: rms.nsw.gov.au

Public transport info

W: transportnsw.info P: 131 500 TTY: 1800 637 500

Carers NSW

Freecall: 1800 242 636

ACT

Road Transport Authority

P: 132 281 W: rego.act.gov.au

ACTION Buses

W: action.act.gov.au P: 131 710 TTY: (02) 6207 0494

Carers ACT

Freecall: 1800 242 636

Staying on the move with dementia

A guide on driving and staying mobile for people, families and carers living with dementia.

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GO AUSTRALIA**
FIGHTDEMENTIA.ORG.AU





Is it safe to drive with dementia?

At some point all people with dementia must stop driving although many will be able to continue to drive safely for some time. This will vary, depending on the symptoms experienced and how rapidly they change. A doctor will be able to assess these symptoms and whether it is safe to continue driving or not.

It is important to plan for when the person with dementia does stop driving so that alternative mobility options can be explored as early as possible.

What is the law?

Any driver diagnosed with dementia must report to Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) in NSW or the Road Transport Authority (RTA) in the ACT. This does not automatically mean that their licence will be taken away, but they will need their doctor to complete a Medical Report Form. They may also be required to have a practical driving assessment conducted by an occupational therapist.

Due to the progressive nature of dementia, a person diagnosed with dementia cannot hold an unrestricted licence. They may hold a modified licence subject to at least an annual review.

A driver has a legal obligation to report their condition to RMS or the RTA. If they continue to drive despite a doctor's advice and are involved in a crash they may be prosecuted and their car insurance may not be valid.

If a doctor is aware that a driver is continuing to drive and feels that their driving is a serious risk to themselves and other road users, the doctor is legally authorised to notify RMS or the RTA directly.

How does dementia affect driving skills?

The key warning signs include:

- forgetting how to get to and from familiar places
- getting lost or forgetting where they parked
- failing to observe traffic signs
- making slow or poor decisions in traffic
- driving at an inappropriate speed
- misjudging speed, distance or turns
- becoming angry, stressed, agitated or confused while driving
- hitting curbs
- poor lane control
- making errors at intersections
- confusing the brake and accelerator pedals
- returning from a routine drive later than usual
- more dents and scratches on the car.



How can we talk about giving up driving?

It is important to engage people diagnosed with dementia, who are able and who want to continue to drive, in discussions about their driving soon after diagnosis.

Short frequent conversations will probably be less stressful and more useful than a long one-off discussion and will allow you to discuss changes in symptoms as they happen.

Discussions on giving up driving can be tense. Tips to help the discussions go well include:

- plan what you want to say and start the discussion when everyone is calm
- express your concerns about safety
- focus on the nature of the disease – many people with dementia have very safe driving records, but this has no bearing on how safe they may be in the future
- acknowledge the benefits of driving and suggest alternative ways of meeting these needs
- concentrate on the person's strengths and the positive aspects of other options
- normalise the situation – everyone will have to stop driving at some point
- try to understand how the person with dementia will be feeling and acknowledge that giving up driving is hard to do
- discuss the financial benefits of selling the car
- appeal to the person's desire to act responsibly
- be patient and firm.