



Driving

Nothing expresses independence more than getting behind the wheel of a vehicle, especially in a country as beautiful and expansive as Canada. According to Transport Canada, most Canadians drive in cars, vans, buses or trucks to get where they want and need to go, on Canada's nearly 900,000 kilometres of road. That's why losing this privilege, or being asked to give it up, can be one of the most upsetting aspects of aging. Growing older doesn't mean you become a worse driver nor is there a set age when everyone should give up driving. But successful aging does require assessing and adapting to the physical and mental changes that may occur over time. Use this chapter to help watch for changes that could signal a need to make adjustments in driving.

State of Affairs: Research



Driving conversations **must happen** and, in many cases, they do.

67%

of Adult Children

surveyed say they have discussed solutions for when it might be time for their parents to limit their driving.

78%

of Seniors

surveyed believe their children/step-children have a shared understanding of solutions to limit driving.

More than 72% of adult children surveyed feel they have an accurate understanding of their parents' ability to drive.



Source:

Home Instead, Inc., franchisor of the Home Instead Senior Care® network, completed 400 telephone interviews with seniors age 65 and older and 400 interviews with adult children of parents age 65 and older in Canada.

For the full executive summaries, go to **4070Talk.com**.



ACT



ACT (*Assess, Consider, Talk*) to help determine how your future will look. Completing the following exercises could help prepare you for the kind of future you desire.

Assess

It can be difficult to judge your own driving ability as well as that of a parent or another senior. You might need the help of others to be objective. If you think that will be the case, enlist the assistance of a family member or friend.

Has there been a driving situation in the past six months that caused you concern?

Explain how you feel about being able to drive. How important is it to you? How would you feel if you had to modify or even give up driving?

Identify medical issues that might compromise your driving abilities such as cataracts or hearing loss. (A driver rehabilitation centre can provide an in-depth evaluation of a person's driving, according to the Ministry of Transportation. See the **Learn More** section for details.)

Consider

An individual at any age could be faced with the inability to drive. It's important to consider a plan in the event that happens.

If you could no longer drive, what would be your plan? How would you get to the places you need and access the services and products you must have?

Identify individuals and/or services you think would be willing to help if you were no longer able to drive such as public transit and special senior services.

Talk

Talking about driving, whether it's your own or someone else's, can be a difficult topic to broach. It's sometimes easier not to talk about it. Procrastination and avoidance, though, could be deadly.

After assessing and considering, write down your plan for remaining independent and safe on the road. Then share your plan with those who may be affected.

Refer to the following conversation tips and suggestions for help communicating your wishes.

Conversation Tips

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"Hey, Dad, what happened to the car? Are you OK? You know, your safety is my No. 1 concern."

"Since the doctor's office has moved further out, I'm not sure I'm comfortable driving that far. Will you help me figure out how to get there?"

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"Say, Mom, how about we take a ride around the neighborhood? It's been a while since we've ridden together."

"I know you're concerned about my driving, but I'm afraid of losing my friends. Let's work on a solution together."

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Consider

If you live alone:

The inability to drive could leave you vulnerable. Have a plan in place that identifies individuals who could help you, and public or private services you could call on for assistance.

Talk

If you are part of a blended family:

If you are concerned about someone in the family, try to schedule a meeting or conference call to address the issues. If you can't get consensus, ask a third party professional or member of the clergy to step in and mediate.

Assess

If you have dementia:

Talk to your doctor about whether you should still drive and for how long. Or consult a driver rehabilitation specialist. (See *contact information in the Learn More* section.)

Learn More

The following tools and resources can help families developing an action plan:

Assessing Your Driving Skills
seniorsdriving.caa.ca

Tips on How to Maintain Your Driving Skills
seniorsdriving.caa.ca

Information on how aging can affect driving
seniorsdriving.caa.ca

Seniors Pre-Driving Check-List
seniorsdriving.caa.ca

Government Approved Functional Driving Assessment Centres
mto.gov.on.ca

How to Understand and Help Older Drivers
seniorsdriving.caa.ca

Driver Improvement Courses from CAA
seniorsdriving.caa.ca

Transportation options for seniors from AAA
seniorsdriving.caa.ca