



Driving

Nothing expresses independence more than getting behind the wheel of a vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration sums it up best: Driving represents freedom, control and competence, allowing us to go where we want and need to go. 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.

66%

of Adult Children

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

81%

of Seniors

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

Nearly 80% of adult children 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 600 telephone interviews with seniors age 65 and older and 600 interviews with adult children of parents age 65 and older in the U.S.

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 specialist can provide an in-depth evaluation of a person's driving, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. See the **Learn More** section for details.)

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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C 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.

T 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.

A 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:

AAA Foundation for Traffic, Safety Self-Rating Tool, *Drivers 65 Plus: Check Your Performance*, that asks a person to respond to 15 statements about driving situations and gives suggestions based on the person's answers
seniordriving.aaa.com

AARP's Driver Safety Program, *Are You a Smart Driver*, which asks 10 questions about today's driving environment and how you react to driving on today's roads
aarp.org

American Occupational Therapy Association's Older Driver Resource Center; driving specialist
aota.org or **866.672.9466**

How to Understand and Influence Older Drivers
nhtsa.gov

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Resources for Older Drivers
nhtsa.gov

Driver Improvement Courses from AAA
seniordriving.aaa.com

Transportation options for seniors from AAA
seniordriving.aaa.com