

## Driving Dilemma

---

Individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia (ADRD) often demonstrate deficiencies in judgment and performance behind the wheel.

**Caregivers should look for these signs which might indicate a person with ADRD should no longer drive or should be evaluated by a professional:**

- Forgetting how to get to familiar places
- Not following traffic signs
- Incorrect signaling
- Moving into the wrong lane
- Confusion at exits or intersections
- Stopping in traffic for no reason
- Showing poor judgment of distance (turns too wide or too tight, running over curbs)
- Not yielding right-of-way
- Slow reaction time
- Driving at speeds not right for conditions
- Becoming easily confused or angry while driving

Continued driving once these warning signs exist can pose dangers to the individual as well as to others on the road. Families are often reluctant to stop the person with ADRD from driving for a variety of reasons such as:

- A. The person with ADRD will resist
- B. Fear the person with ADRD will experience a decrease in self-esteem from the loss of mobility and independence
- C. The spouse depends on the person with ADRD to do the driving

Sometimes, a person with ADRD can still drive because their travels follow a routine, such as driving to work every day or to the same grocery store, bank, etc. However, when something unexpected happens, such as a construction detour or a snowstorm, the person's inability to cope may become evident. Many people with ADRD do not give up driving until they are involved in an accident. This "dilemma" needs to be continuously monitored.

The responsibility for curtailing an individual with ADRD's driving usually falls to the caregiver. It's a difficult time for everyone. The person with ADRD may become angry. The caregiver may be saddened and guilty by the fact that yet another thing has been taken away from their loved one.

**Here are some suggestions if you meet resistance when "taking away the keys":**

- Have the family physician write a letter or "prescription" stating the individual can no longer drive. Having a letter allows the family to refer to it as often as necessary.
- Move the car to another location out of sight. You can say the car is in the shop.
- Disable the car by removing the distributor cap or some other part or file down the individual's car key so it will no longer work.
- **In Anchorage, contact Providence Outpatient & Rehabilitation at: #212-6300 to schedule a driving assessment.**

**\*Note:** In Alaska, the DMV will consider canceling a person's driver's license if there is written testimony from a physician or member of the general public stating the specific problem and/or danger to the public. The testimony is kept confidential. Examinations may be required before a determination is made. Police, responding to the scene of an accident, may also report cases of confused, disoriented or irrational drivers, which in turn may be investigated by the DMV.

**Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska**  
1750 Abbott Rd.  
Anchorage, AK 99507  
907-561-3313 or  
toll-free within Alaska 1 (800) 478-1080