

Driving information and contract

Driving requires the ability to react quickly to a variety of circumstances. Because of this, a person living with Alzheimer's or another dementia will, at some point, be unable to drive. Planning ahead can help ease the transition.

Plan early for driving retirement.

- Plan to discuss how retirement from driving will be handled before it becomes an issue.
- Be sympathetic as you address the topic because retiring from driving and the perceived loss of independence is difficult for many.
- Visit [alz.org/driving](https://www.alz.org/driving) for helpful information and tools created with support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Keep a written record of your observations to share with the person living with dementia, family members and health care professionals.

Tips to help the person living with dementia retire from driving.

- Transition driving responsibilities to others. Tell the person you will drive, arrange for someone else to drive or arrange a taxi service or special transportation services for older adults.
- Find ways to reduce the person's need to drive. Have prescription medicines, groceries or meals delivered.
- Solicit the support of others. Ask your physician to advise the person not to drive. Involving your physician in a family conference on driving may be more effective than trying to persuade the person not to drive by yourself. Ask the physician to write a letter or prescription stating that the person with dementia must not drive. You can then use the document to remind your family member what's been decided.
- Ask a respected family authority figure or your attorney to reinforce the message about not driving. When the person is still in the early stage of dementia, ask them to sign a driving contract (included at the end of this document) that gives you permission to help them stop driving when the time comes.

What if the person is reluctant to retire from driving?

- Experiment with ways to distract the person from driving. Mention that someone else should drive because the route has changed, driving conditions are dangerous, or you want to give him or her a chance to sit back, rest and enjoy the scenery.

- You may also want to arrange for another person to sit in the back seat to distract the person while someone else drives. If the disease is in an advanced stage or there is a history of anger and aggressiveness, it's best not to drive alone with the person.
- If the person living with dementia wanders, they may also do so by car. Consider enrolling in a wandering response service. Contact the **Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900)** for more information. As the disease progresses and the person is no longer able to make decisions, substitute their driver's license with a photo identification card. However, do not assume that taking away a driver's license prevents driving. The person may not remember that they no longer have a license or even that a license is legally required to drive.

What if the person refuses to stop?

If the person insists on driving, consider the following steps as a last resort:

- Control access to the car keys. Designate one person who will do all of the driving and give that individual exclusive access to the car keys.
- Disable the car. Remove the distributor cap, battery or starter wire. Ask a mechanic to install a "kill wire" that will prevent the car from starting unless the switch is thrown. Or give the person a set of keys that looks like his or her old set, but does not work to start the car.
- Consider selling the car. This may allow you to save enough in insurance premiums, gas and maintenance costs to pay for public transportation, including taxi rides.

Resources

[alz.org/driving](https://www.alz.org/driving)

Driving contract (see next page)

Driving contract

I, _____,
(name of person living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia) understand that due to the nature of Alzheimer's disease or dementia, there will come a day when it is no longer safe for me to drive. The purpose of this document is for me to share my directions for what I would like to happen when I cannot drive anymore.

I am aware that due to Alzheimer's or another dementia, I may not be able to recognize when I am no longer driving safely. In that case, I have asked the following person (people) to tell me that it is no longer safe for me to drive.

I understand that I may forget that I cannot drive anymore and may try to continue driving. If this happens, please know that I support all actions taken, including removing or disabling my car, to help ensure my safety and the safety of others.

Signature of person living with Alzheimer's or another dementia *Date*

I, _____,
(person appointed above) commit to telling

(name of person living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia) when it is no longer safe for him/her to drive. I commit to taking whatever actions are necessary from that time on to help ensure his/her safety and the safety of others, as he/she has requested.

Signature of person appointed above *Date*

Signature of person living with Alzheimer's or another dementia *Date*

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