



When Is It Time to Stop Driving?

BY CURTIS SIU, MD
INTERNAL MEDICINE

ph 949.420.5988 f 949.420.5989
www.saddlebackmedicalgroup.com

Southern California is a car-centered society so its no wonder we want to drive as long as possible. Although it's possible to maintain excellent driving skills, a time may come when limited or no driving is a good decision.

What are the warning signs that indicate diminished driving skills?

1. Nervousness or fear while driving
2. Dents and scrapes on the car, fences, mail boxes, garage doors, curbs, etc.
3. Difficulty staying in the lane of travel
4. Getting lost
5. Trouble paying attention to signals, road signs and pavement markings
6. Slower response to unexpected situations.
7. Medical conditions or medications that affect the ability to handle the car safely
8. Frequent "close calls" (i.e. almost crashing)
9. Trouble judging distance between cars.
10. Drivers honk at you or you're more angry with other drivers
11. Friends or relatives warn you not to drive
12. Difficulty seeing the side of the road when looking straight ahead
13. You're easily distracted or can't concentrate when driving
14. It's hard to turn and check over your shoulder while backing up or changing lanes
15. Frequent traffic tickets or "warnings"

If you notice one or more of these signs, you may want to have your driving assessed by a professional or take a driver refresher class, like the one offered at the Florence Sylvester Senior Center in Laguna Hills. To rule out any physical problems, check with your doctor if you are having difficulty concentrating or memory problems.

How Can I Help Someone Else Limit or Stop Driving?

Most drivers monitor themselves and gradually limit or stop driving when they feel unsafe. However, some fail to recognize declining abilities. Medical conditions like dementia or early Alzheimer's may make some drivers unable to evaluate their driving. Some fear an over-dependence on others for necessities or social and leisure activities.

Here are some guidelines for those who want to help:

Step 1 – Ride with the person and see if you notice any of the warning signs listed above.

Step 2 – Have conversations early and often about the well-being of the driver. Start the conversation out of a sincere sense of caring and base it on what you have observed.

Step 3 – Suggest alternatives. One size does not fit all. While no driving may be the only answer, stopping driving too early can cause a person's overall health to decline prematurely. Research transportation options. Are there relatives, friends, or neighbors who can assist? Is there public transportation? Consider using OCTA's ACCESS disabled transportation, city, or county sponsored programs.

Step 4 – If the situation becomes more unsafe, and the impairment is increasingly obvious, it may be necessary to involve the driver's doctor.

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