

Applying the Brake: Warning Signs Your Loved One May Need to Stop Driving

Finding yourself a bit worried about seeing your Mom or Dad behind the wheel? You aren't alone; as parents age, adult children often avoid a conversation about driving concerns. However, this tricky conversation is an important one to have and can keep your loved one – and others on the road – safe. But how do you know if your loved one is an unsafe driver, and what can you do about it without causing major family discourse? Check out a few of our tips to make your conversation a bit easier.

What to Look For

Not all seniors are unsafe drivers – some are excellent! But as your loved one ages, there are some medical complications that could cause driving challenges. Keep your eyes peeled for some of these warning signs:

- Vision Impairment
Older adults have a higher incidence of conditions that cause progressive vision impairment. If your loved one has a diagnosis of glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, or other progressive vision conditions, there can be complications that range from depth perception to night vision issues.
- Memory Loss
If your loved one has a history of becoming confused or lost in familiar places, driving should be discontinued until a neurologist has had the chance to weigh in.
- Judgment Concerns
Sometimes, memory issues and questionable judgment go hand in hand and can negatively affect the driving process
- Lower Extremity Weakness
You need healthy legs and feet to effectively drive. If there are range of motion or strength concerns regarding your loved one's lower extremities, driving could be hazardous.



- Reaction Time

Changes in the brain or muscles can cause problems with reaction time. A slower reaction time is often a major culprit in senior related accidents

- History of accidents

If your loved one has a recent history of driving mishaps, mistakes, or accidents, it might be a good time to have an honest and caring conversation.

What to Do Next

Asking your loved one to surrender the vehicle keys is serious business. Not only does driving represent independence, it can be embarrassing for the senior to be approached by the adult child. If you find yourself being concerned about your loved one driving, be honest but not



accusatory. Your loved one may be surprised or defensive when you bring it up; don't be afraid to stop the conversation and revisit it at another time.

Consider, too, bringing your loved one's doctor into the conversation. With your loved one's permission, talk candidly about your concerns with the doctor. It can be helpful for everyone to get the opinion of someone who is aware of your loved one's conditions, capabilities, and challenges.

Driving is an important part of your loved one's life. A well-timed, compassionate, and honest conversation can help both of you decide what is the safest for everyone involved.

Have concerns about challenges your loved one is facing while living alone? [Give our friendly office staff a call](#) to talk about safety issues, companionship, or respite care.

Visiting Angels of Denver, CO

303-232-9999

gelliott@visitingangels.com

www.visitingangels.com/Denver

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