

DRIVING SAFETY

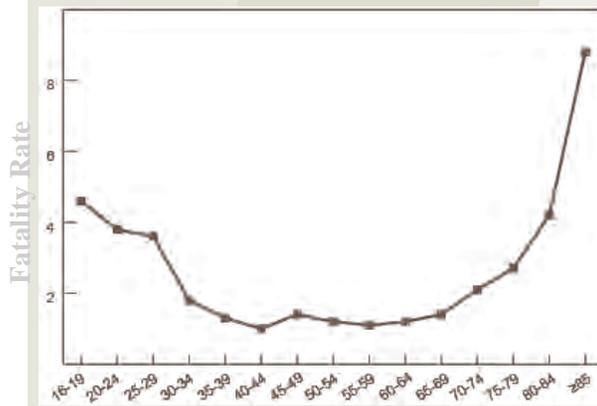
Driving is a part of every day life in North America. However, it is important to remember that driving is a privilege, not a right.

Driving is a complex task that requires a number of abilities including vision, motor, and cognitive abilities. For your own safety and the safety of other road users, it is important to know what medical conditions may affect your driving ability.

High Risk Drivers

There are a number of high risk segments of the driving population including drivers who speed, those who drive while impaired by alcohol and drugs, and those who drive while medically impaired. For younger drivers, fatality rates are high due to speeding, driving under the influence, and distracted driving. For older drivers, high fatality rates are due to the presence of one or more medical conditions and/or the treatment for those conditions, increased susceptibility to injury, and medical complications following a crash.

DRIVER FATALITY RATE (PER 100 MILLION MILES TRAVELLED)



Driver Age Group

IHS Fatality Facts, 2011

PREPARING FOR DRIVING RETIREMENT

- Most people will outlive their driving career: Males by 6 years and females by 10 years, on average
- Those who stop driving do so for many reasons including:
 - Not feeling comfortable while driving
 - Declines in driving abilities
 - Finances
- Transitioning from the driver seat to the passenger seat is an individual process
- Ways to prepare for driving cessation include:
 - Becoming aware of and familiar with other transportation options in your community
 - Public transportation (e.g., bus, light rail transit)
 - Community shuttles/senior transit services (e.g., transportation from medical facilities for appointments, transit service from your place of worship, volunteer driver programs, etc.)
 - Taxis/private drivers
 - Depositing the dollars that you spend on your automobile into a 'mobility' account to pay for alternate transport
 - Having conversations with family and friends
 - Consider moving to a more walkable neighborhood

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Watch videos on medical conditions and driving in older individuals at www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Older+Drivers/Video+Toolkit+On+Medical+Conditions

Kansas Highway Patrol

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This brochure was developed by a collaboration between Kansas Highway Patrol and the Medically At-Risk Driver Centre at the University of Alberta.



Medical Conditions and Driving



Most older drivers are safe drivers

Many older drivers can 'self-regulate' to keep themselves and others safe. This is because older drivers, as a group:

- Do not drive during rush hour
- Do not drive during inclement weather (rain, snow)
- Restrict highway/freeway driving
- Restrict night driving



Illness, not age, affects your ability to safely drive

SENSORY

Illnesses that can affect your vision and sensation can impair your ability to drive safely. Examples include:

- **Cataracts**
- **Hearing loss**
- **Neuropathy**

There may be treatments for some conditions that help you to continue to drive safely (e.g., cataract surgery). Restrictions may be placed on your licence (e.g., corrective lenses, day time driving only) to ensure your safety.

MOTOR

Illnesses that can affect motor function include:

- **Parkinson's disease**
- **Paralysis, due to a stroke**
- **Arthritis**

Depending on the nature of your impairment, you may have to make adaptations to your vehicle that will allow you to continue driving safely.

Some motor illnesses also have a cognitive component (e.g., stroke, Parkinson's) that affects driving.

COGNITIVE

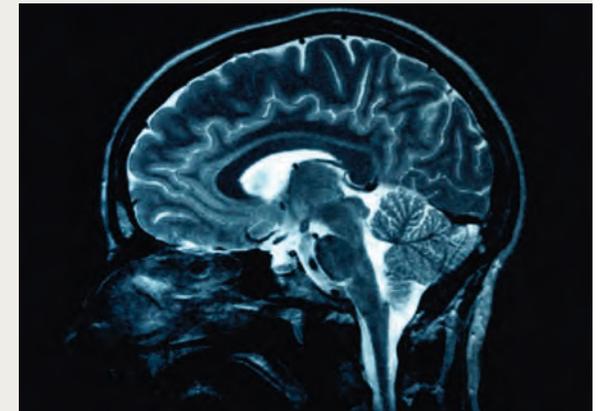
Common illnesses that affect cognitive functions (e.g., memory, attention, judgment) include:

- **Dementia**
- **Stroke**
- **Brain injury**

The mental abilities you need to drive safely (e.g., quick decision making, paying attention to many things at once, judging distances) may be affected by cognitive illnesses.

DEMENTIA INCREASES YOUR RISK

- Drivers with dementia are 3.5 times more likely to be in an at-fault collision than healthy drivers
- There are over 100 causes of dementia
- 90% of dementias are irreversible
 - Even with treatment, cognitive function does not return to 'normal'
- 1/3 of individuals in the early stages of dementia are **safe** to drive, so diagnosis of dementia alone is not enough to take away someone's license
- All individuals with a dementia will become unsafe to drive at some point in their illness
- The disease not only robs someone of the ability to drive, but also of the awareness of their declining safety



DRIVERS' LICENCES IN KANSAS

- A drivers' license is valid for 6 years
- After age 65, individuals are required to renew their license every 4 years
- At renewal, drivers are required to pass a vision test and may also be required to take a written examination of traffic laws and signals, as well as an on-road examination

Warning signs that driving may have become unsafe

- Unaware of driving errors
- Getting lost or confused while driving
- Other drivers honking
- Straddling lanes, wide turns, etc.
- Missing traffic signs
- Unable to keep up with the speed of traffic

Medications and driving

Many prescription and 'over-the counter' medications can affect an individual's ability to drive. It is important that drivers of any age check with their health care provider or pharmacist about possible side effects of any medication that is being taken, particularly with respect to driving.