



# Driving and dementia



Alzheimer National Helpline

**1800 341 341**

This factsheet is for people who drive and who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia.

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## Three steps you must take following a diagnosis of dementia

A diagnosis of dementia does not mean you must stop driving straightaway. However, there are three steps you must take after you've been diagnosed. Talk to your doctor about these steps and your doctor can guide you on each one.

**Step 1:**

**Inform your insurance company**

All car insurance policies require that you tell the insurance company of a change to your health status. This includes a diagnosis of dementia. If you do not do this, your insurance policy may not be valid.

**The insurance company:**

- should not withdraw your insurance cover if your doctor and/or your on-road driving assessment state you can continue to drive safely;
- should not automatically increase the cost of your insurance if your doctor and/or your on-road driving assessment state that you can continue to drive safely;
- will tell you what they need you to do in order to keep your insurance cover in place.

See page 3 for information about the on-road assessment.



## Three steps you must take following a diagnosis of dementia

### Step 2: Inform your Driving Licence Service

It is your responsibility to tell the National Driving Licence Service (NDLS) about your diagnosis. You need to do this in person, and they recommend that you make an appointment.

You can find details of your local centre and book an appointment on the NDLS website, [www.ndls.ie](http://www.ndls.ie) (see page 7 for details).

#### When you visit the centre, you need to bring the following with you:

- your current driving licence,
- proof of your Personal Public Service (PPS) number,
- a completed driving licence application form (D401), and
- a completed Driving Licence Medical Report form (D501) that confirms you can continue to drive. Your doctor will complete this form, it is also available to download from the Road Safety Authority website (see page 7 for details).

Your appointment with the NDLS should be free of charge. If your medical report states you can continue to drive, they will issue you with an updated licence.



## Three steps you must take following a diagnosis of dementia

### Step 3:

#### Complete an 'on-road' driving assessment

Your insurance company and your doctor may ask you to complete an 'on-road' driving assessment. This is **not** like the driving test you take to get your full driving licence.

Normally, for an 'on-road' assessment, an assessor accompanies you as you drive around familiar routes in your local area. The assessor will focus on your ability to drive safely and competently. Following your assessment, the assessor will write a report.

The report will confirm one of the three outcomes.

- You can continue to drive.
- You can continue to drive, but with restrictions on your driving. For example, the report might state you should not drive at night or you should not drive alone. It might also recommend that you do the test again – for example, in 6 months.
- You need to stop driving.

The report will usually be sent to your doctor and your insurance company.

Your doctor or healthcare professional may be able to give you details of qualified assessors who are experienced in working with people with dementia. There is a cost involved each time you take the on-road assessment and currently there is no grant available to cover this cost.

"I did my driving assessment and I passed... I felt 10 feet tall. I know [at some point] I will give up driving."



## Tips for driving safely

Driving is an important life skill. Some people with dementia decide they do not want to continue to drive. Other people want to continue driving for as long as it is safe to do so.

Completing your on-road assessment successfully is an important step in confirming that you can continue to drive safely. In addition to this assessment, there are practical tips you can follow to help you drive safely.

**Here are some Do's and Don'ts for safe driving:**

### Do...

- drive routes you are familiar with
- try to keep your journey short
- allow plenty of time to get to where you are going
- travel with someone else

### Don't...

- drive if you feel tired, stressed or upset
- drive at busy times, such as rush hour
- drive in bad weather
- drive at night

"I give myself more time and I plan my route carefully... I drive the roads I know and that works for me at the moment."



## The decision to stop driving

At some point, you will stop driving. This is because, over time, dementia will affect your ability to drive safely. Your safety and the safety of other people is the most important thing to consider.

You may decide to stop driving yourself. Or your doctor or your on-road assessor may state that you need to stop driving. This is a difficult step. Many people link driving to their independence and freedom. However, there are alternatives to driving which can work very well.

### **How to prepare for giving up driving**

When you are still driving, you can begin to ease yourself out of driving. Use other forms of transport from time to time to get used to the idea.

“I still have my car but I have started to walk to my local shop. It gives me exercise.”



## How to prepare for giving up driving

When you are still driving, you can begin to ease yourself out of driving. Use other forms of transport from time to time to get used to the idea.

### Some alternatives to driving include:

- 👉 **Taxis**  
your local firm may agree a lower fare if you are a regular customer.

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- 👉 **Public transport**  
depending on where you live, the local bus or train service might work well for you.

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- 👉 **Volunteer service**  
some local voluntary organisations provide transport services. Speak to your doctor or your Public Health Nurse about organisations in your area.

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- 👉 **Rural Transport Schemes**  
these schemes provide bus and taxi services. To find your local scheme, visit [www.ruraltransportnetwork.ie](http://www.ruraltransportnetwork.ie) or call **066 7147002**.

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- 👉 **Family and friends**  
talk to family members and friends about how they can help. If you have regular appointments or places you like to go, they may be able to take turns bringing you and collecting you.

Remember, when you give up driving, you will not have the costs that come with owning a car, such as car insurance and car tax. You may even decide to sell your car. You can use these savings to pay for other ways of getting out and about. It might even be cheaper in the long run.

It is important to try to keep getting out and visiting people and places that you enjoy. Giving up driving does not mean you have to give up everything.



## Useful contacts

### **The Alzheimer Society of Ireland's National Helpline**

This service provides information about dementia and about supports and services in your local area.

**Freefone** 1800 341 341

**Email** [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie)

**Visit** [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

### **The National Driving Licence Service**

To find your local centre and to book an appointment. Please note you must book your appointment online, this phone number is not a booking line.

**Visit** [www.ndls.ie](http://www.ndls.ie)

**Phone** 0761 087 880

### **The Road Safety Authority**

For information about the medical report required to update your driving licence:

**Visit** [www.rsa.ie/RSA/Licensed-Drivers/Safe-driving/Medical-Issues/](http://www.rsa.ie/RSA/Licensed-Drivers/Safe-driving/Medical-Issues/)

### **The Rural Transport Network**

For information about transport services that may be available in rural areas:

**Visit** [www.ruraltransportnetwork.ie](http://www.ruraltransportnetwork.ie)

**Phone** 066 714 7002



## For more information

Alzheimer National Helpline  
**1800 341 341**

You can also contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland's free and confidential Helpline for information about dementia, about areas such as:

- dementia,
- practical tips for living well,
- legal and financial planning, and
- supports and services in your area.

Our Helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 5 pm and Saturday 10 am to 4 pm.

 **Call: 1800 341 341**

 **Email: [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie)**

 **Visit: [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)**

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