

Driving skills can change... What are the warning signs?



If several driving warning signs are checked,
or you see a pattern, a cognitive
driving assessment is recommended.

DCAC  technology designed to assess
drivers with medical conditions

DRIVER COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT CENTER, LLC

Dedicated to Creating a Safer Driving Community

4450 Black Ave., Suite D • Pleasanton, CA 94566
tel 925-249-5947 • fax 925-201-3957

www.dcacbayarea.com

What are the warning signs?

- Forward head posture causing decreased neck and trunk flexibility
- Getting physically “stuck” during walking or other activities
- Slow motor (physical) performance
- Medication side effects e.g. daytime sleepiness, sudden fatigue, “wearing off”, fluctuations
- Fatigue
- Driving too slow (typically) or too fast
- Hitting both pedals with one foot by accident / confusion with pedals
- Slow to identify and avoid potentially hazardous situations
- Accidents or near misses
- Close calls - being honked at by other drivers
- Unaware of other vehicles, cyclists & pedestrians
- Missing traffic signals & or failing to stop at STOP signs / traffic lights
- Stopping in traffic for no reason
- Moving in to the wrong lane
- Pattern of getting lost, even in familiar areas eg driving to and from store
- Forgetting the purpose of trips
- Disorientation in familiar places
- Trouble navigating turns/ hitting curbs/driving up & across median strip
- Parking incorrectly & confusion at parking lot exits
- Poor judgment with left turns
- Friends no longer wanting to ride with you or your loved one
- Scrapes and dents on the car with no explanation
- Damage to the garage door or mailbox with no explanation
- Defensiveness and agitation when you try to talk about what you are seeing
- Unaware of driving errors... belief still good safe driver - lack of insight and self-awareness

Other non-driving warning signs

- Confusion with taking medications correctly
- Decline in ability to do everyday tasks
- Two or more falls in a year - correlation with at-fault collision risk
- Loss of strength or balance - changes in physical status
- Memory loss

If several driving warning signs are checked, or you see a pattern, a cognitive driving assessment is recommended.

Ask yourself:

“Would I allow my grandchild or child to ride alone with my spouse/mom/dad?”

If you are unsure, then go for a ride-along!

Things to remember during and after the ride-along:

- Remain calm
- Do not give feedback while in the car
- Be specific about what you observed
- Continue to stay calm
- If your loved one is unreceptive to hearing your feedback, stay strong and tell them you will talk about this another time and revisit the conversation the next day. Important to discuss as soon as possible, especially if memory is becoming an issue.
- Explain next steps in assessing driving ability

Tools for when a discussion about driving becomes necessary, **BE PREPARED, BE STRATEGIC, and OPEN THE DISCUSSION.**

BE PREPARED

- Plan for future transportation needs, call local senior centers and volunteer driving programs
- Make a list of safety and medical concerns
- Explore legal concerns and licensing requirements
- Plan early, especially if illness is progressive, financial affairs, trust/estate, health care directive

BE STRATEGIC

- Consider family dynamics, some family members may not acknowledge the problem
- Decide who would be best to raise the topic and have a conversation
- Be aware that the driver may lack insight about driving problems
- Expect resistance, find out what driving means to the person
- Remain positive, focus on what you can do
- Be sensitive but resolved

OPEN THE DISCUSSION

- When appropriate, acknowledge the driver's past driving record and experience
- Note that things have changed
- Blame the medical condition, not the person
- Discuss the implications of having a crash
- Be responsive to their concerns
- Focus on need for a driving assessment
- Talk about future transportation options that are available, know the options BEFORE you talk
- Contact a Family Mediation Specialist, Geriatric Care Manager/Aging Life Care Professional to help mediate if there is tension

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Elder Guru

<https://www.elderguru.com/download-the-senior-driving-self-assessment-test/>

AAA Senior Driver Safety & Mobility

<https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/senior-driver-safety-mobility/>

Driving Safely While Aging Gracefully (NHTSA)

<https://nhtsa.gov/older-drivers/driving-safely-while-aging-gracefully#self-assessment>

NHTSA Older Drivers Page

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/older-drivers>