

## DEMENTIA INCREASES YOUR RISK

- Drivers with dementia are 3.5 times more likely to be in an at-fault collision than healthy drivers of the same age
- There are over 100 causes of dementia
- 90% of dementias are irreversible. That is, 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 driver's licence
- However, all individuals with a progressive dementia will become unsafe to drive at some point in their illness
- Dementia not only robs someone of the ability to drive but also of the awareness of the declines in their ability to drive



## DRIVER LICENSING IN ALBERTA

- Valid for up to 5 years
- A driver's medical is required at age 75, 80, and every 2 years thereafter
- All drivers are required to disclose medical conditions at the time of licence renewal
- Alberta Transportation or your doctor may refer you for a driving test to assess your driving competency

## PREPARING FOR DRIVING RETIREMENT

- Transitioning from the driver's seat to the passenger's seat is an individual process
- Ways to prepare for that transition include:
  - ◆ Talking with family and friends
  - ◆ Becoming familiar with other transportation options in your community
    - Public transportation (e.g., bus, light rail transit)
    - Taxis/private or volunteer drivers
    - Community shuttles/senior's transportation services
  - ◆ Creating a 'mobility' account to pay for alternate transportation by depositing dollars that you routinely spend on your automobile into a special account
  - ◆ Considering a move to a more walkable neighborhood

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information on this topic and for additional resources, please visit our website: [www.mard.ualberta.ca](http://www.mard.ualberta.ca)

Medically At-Risk Driver Centre  
Department of Family Medicine  
University of Alberta  
Phone: 780-492-6273  
Email: [mard@ualberta.ca](mailto:mard@ualberta.ca)

Watch videos on medical conditions and driving related to older individuals at <http://search.usa.gov/search/news?affiliate=dot-nhtsa&channel=2371&query=older+drivers>



**MARD**  
Medically At-Risk  
Driver Centre

## Medical Conditions and Driving



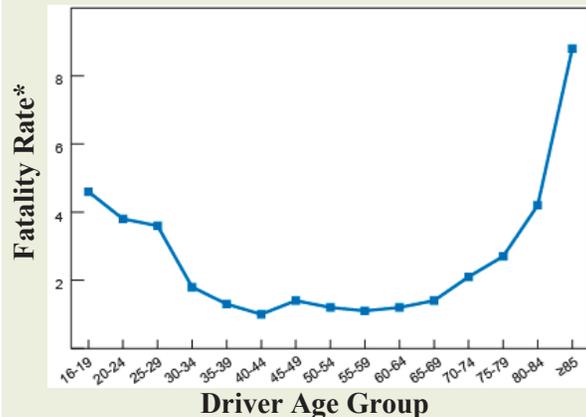
## Driving safety

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.

## High risk drivers

- High risk drivers include those who:
  - ◆ Speed
  - ◆ Drive while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs
  - ◆ Drive while medically impaired
- 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
  - ◆ Medical complications following a crash

### FATALITY RATE



IIHS Fatality Facts, 2011

\*Per 100 million miles travelled

## Most older drivers are safe drivers



Many older drivers 'self-regulate' to keep themselves and others safe.

Self-regulations include:

- Not driving during rush hour
- Not driving during bad weather (e.g., rain, snow)
- Restricting highway/freeway driving
- Restricting night driving

## Illness, not age, affects your ability to drive safely

Driving is a complex task that requires sensory, motor, and cognitive abilities. For your own safety and the safety of other road users, it is important to know which medical conditions may affect your driving ability. Some **examples** include:

### SENSORY

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

### MOTOR

- **Arthritis**
- **Paralysis**
- **Parkinson's disease**

### COGNITIVE

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

For some medical conditions (e.g., those that affect sensory and motor abilities), there may be restrictions (e.g., daytime driving only, the use of hand controls) that could allow you to continue to drive. For other medical conditions (e.g., those resulting in ongoing cognitive impairment), restrictions are inappropriate.

## Warning signs that driving may have become unsafe

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

## Medications and driving

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