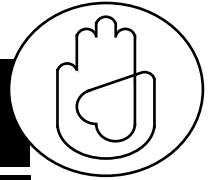


ELDERCARE UPDATE



Partnership for Eldercare Partnering: with Con Ed can help you with the needs of your aging loved ones
Winter 2007

The Driving Dilemma and Your Older Relative

Conversation Overheard ...

Sam, "My eyes are so bad I can hardly see the menu."
Sarah: "My arthritis hurts so much I can't even turn my neck."

Harry: "My blood pressure pills make me so dizzy, I feel like my head is spinning."

Helen: "I know what you mean, but, hey, let's look at the bright side. At least we can still drive."

While humorous, older drivers and their concerned caregivers find little humor discussing the issue of giving up the car keys and it often creates a great deal of anxiety for the family members. The most effective approach to limit or encourage your elderly loved one to retire from driving involves progressive steps and a combination of strategies that fit the family's circumstances, resources and relationships. Your ultimate goal is to avoid a crisis which can endanger the older driver and others on the road.

START EARLY AND RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS

Ideally, the first conversations about safe driving should occur long before driving becomes a problem. Early, occasional and candid conversations establish a pattern of open dialogue and allow time for the older adult to consider his or her driving skills and make appropriate modifications.

Before you ask a family member to significantly restrict or stop driving, look for these signs:

- **Changes in physical ability, medications, memory or judgment.**
- **Has the older driver expressed concern about driving safely? Are they limiting where they drive? Are they observing the rules of the road?**
- **Have others actually witnessed your older relative driving unsafely? Is there evidence of a recent accident?**

FROM THE SIGNS TO THE CONVERSATION

Recognizing that the time has come for discussion, below are some suggestions for getting started:

- **DON'T** criticize the older person **WHILE** they are driving! This can easily distract them.
- Share your concerns calmly about what you have observed and ask if the older person shares similar concerns.
- **LISTEN** as the older driver expresses what he thinks his life will be like without driving.
- Bring in a respected third party, someone whom he will "hear." Often a minister, doctor, or friend can communicate without the emotional reaction.

WHEN THEY STILL WON'T GIVE UP THE CAR KEYS

- Be patient and don't be discouraged by a negative reaction. Prepare to have several conversations where you state your concern for the driver and the well being of others on the road.
- Encourage the driver to take a driving test or speak to a doctor for an objective decision about driving safely.
- Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles anonymously and request that they schedule an appointment for a driving test.
- Speak with a trusted physician about issuing a **"NO DRIVING PRESCRIPTION."**

YOUR SUPPORTIVE APPROACH MATTERS

The transition from driver to passenger is not always easy. Your support and understanding is necessary before, during and after driving changes are made.

PARTNERSHIP FOR ELDERCARE will prepare a list of community resources, provide tips for discussion and lend support to the concerned caregiver.

CALL US:

212-442-3113 or 1-800-94 ELDER