

15 Signs Driving May Be Difficult Self Assessment



15 Signs Driving May Be More Difficult

A Practical Guide For Older Drivers And Families

Driving gives us freedom, independence, and choice.

For many people, it is one of the most important parts of everyday life. It helps us get to appointments, see family and friends, go shopping, and stay connected to the community.

Because driving can feel automatic, it is easy to miss the early signs that it may be becoming harder.

The reality is that driving is a complex task. It relies on a combination of attention, memory, judgement, visual scanning, physical coordination, insight, and the ability to respond quickly to changing situations on the road.

Changes in health, cognition, vision, mobility, fatigue, medication, or confidence can all affect driving over time.

This guide is designed to help older drivers and families notice possible warning signs early, so that the right conversations and next steps can happen before a crisis or major safety event occurs.

This guide is educational only. It is not a clinical assessment, not a licensing decision, and not a substitute for medical advice.

To Help Check Where You Are At Here's A Quick Self Assessment Guide.

This can be done with a friend or family member. Whilst this is NOT a clinical assessment it may help you start considering what are the best steps for your situation.

Self Assessment : 15 Warning Signs Driving Is Difficult

Do you:

- Live with a health condition that may affect safe driving, such as stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease, heart disease, epilepsy, arthritis, anxiety, or other neurological or medical conditions?
- Take medication that may impact your ability to drive safely?
- Have near misses when driving?
- Have difficulty maintaining concentration while driving?
- Feel exhausted after driving for an hour or less?
- Have difficulty with glare from oncoming headlights, streetlights or other bright or shiny objects, especially at dawn, dusk and at night?
- Find it hard to turn your head, neck, shoulders or body while driving or parking?
- Have passengers point out things on the road that were not noticed, or were noticed too late?
- Rely on passengers more often for directions or support while driving?
- Have difficulty reacting quickly to the actions of other drivers?
misread, miss, or ignore traffic signs or signals?
- Find it harder to judge distance between cars?
- drive too fast or too slowly for the conditions?
- Feel overwhelmed in heavy traffic or unfamiliar environments?
- Become more easily flustered, stressed, or angry while driving?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, it does not automatically mean driving is unsafe. It may, however, be a sign that further discussion or assessment would be helpful.

Why these signs matter

Driving is one of the most cognitively demanding everyday activities we do.

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Even subtle changes in attention, processing speed, memory, vision, judgement, reaction time, mobility, or confidence can affect a person's ability to manage:

- busy intersections
- merging traffic
- roundabouts
- unexpected hazards
- lane changes
- navigation in unfamiliar areas
- fast-changing road conditions

Often, people begin to compensate without realising it. They may avoid driving at night, stick to familiar local routes, avoid peak hour traffic, or become more dependent on passengers. These changes can be sensible and protective, but they may also be early signs that driving is becoming more difficult.

What to do next if you are concerned

If some of these signs sound familiar, the next step is not to panic.

Instead, it can help to:

1. Start the conversation early

Try to talk about driving before there is a serious incident, crisis, or conflict. Early conversations are often easier and more productive.

2. Focus on specific examples

It is often more helpful to talk about what has been noticed rather than making broad statements. For example:

- "I've noticed driving at night seems more tiring lately."
- "You seemed a bit unsure at that roundabout."
- "There have been a few near misses recently."

3. Speak with the GP

The treating doctor plays an important role in reviewing health issues, medications, and medical fitness to drive.

4. Consider an in-clinic assessment

In some cases, an in-clinic driving-related assessment may help identify cognitive, physical, visual, and functional factors relevant to driving safety.

5. Plan early for alternatives

Even where someone is still driving, it can be helpful to begin thinking ahead about transport options, family support, community access, and ways to maintain independence.

How Occupational Therapy Brisbane can help

At Occupational Therapy Brisbane, we offer an **in-clinic cognitive fitness to drive assessment**.

This assessment looks at cognitive, physical, visual, and functional factors relevant to driving safety. Depending on the person's presentation, it may include:

- structured clinical discussion
- standardised screening measures
- reaction and hazard-related tasks
- functional observation
- driving-related questionnaires

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- identify areas of strength and concern relevant to driving
- provide useful clinical information to the treating doctor

- help clarify whether further review or formal practical driver assessment may be indicated

Possible outcomes of the assessment may include:

- findings that are supportive of continued driving at present
- findings that raise concerns about unrestricted driving
- findings that suggest further medical review or formal practical driver assessment may be needed

This assessment is not, by itself, a licensing decision, and it is not the same as a formal practical driver assessment completed by a suitably qualified occupational therapist driver assessor.

Before an assessment

Prior to an appointment, we may request:

- current driver licence details
- a medical summary from the treating doctor
- a recent optometrist or vision report, where relevant
- relevant driving history, including any recent crashes, near misses, or traffic offences

A note for families

Changes in driving are often emotionally difficult for everyone involved.

For many people, driving is closely tied to identity, confidence, routine, and independence. That is why these conversations need to be handled with care, respect, and good planning.

Where concerns are present, earlier action is often kinder and safer than waiting until a major event forces the issue.

Get in touch

If you are concerned about changes in driving and would like to discuss whether an assessment may be appropriate, our team is here to help.

Occupational Therapy Brisbane

Phone: **1300 783 200**

Email: **Support@gethealthcaredirect.com.au**

Website: **OccupationalTherapyBrisbane.com.au**

David Norris

Senior Occupational Therapist

Founder




About Us

At Occupational Therapy Brisbane you can access a range of services, as well as fully-customised care, depending on your needs and referral brief.

Whether you're looking for services for yourself, a family member, you're a case manager, or you're acting for a GP practice or consultant, insurance company or aged care service provider, – whatever your situation is, our team offers you highly skilled and motivated practitioners to achieve the outcomes relevant for you or your client.

Occupational Therapy Brisbane is an independent occupational therapy service specialising in providing you high quality therapists specialising in neurotherapy across Brisbane.

The neurotherapy hub offers the following services. Please click which best meets your needs or goals.

 <p>Neuro Technology Hub</p> <p>Matches you with the right technology, tools and devices to achieve your goals.</p>	 <p>Safe Driver Hub</p> <p>Comprehensive cognitive fitness to drive assessment to current drivers and people 75+ years old.</p>	 <p>Modify Your Home Hub</p> <p>From simple to complex solutions there are many ways to achieve a safer and easier home.</p>	 <p>Memory and Thinking Hub</p> <p>Therapy programs to help you overcome your memory loss and thinking changes.</p>
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Note:

Currently drivers aged 75 years and older are required to carry a valid medical certificate every time they drive. This certificate is issued by a doctor who assesses and determines that you are medically

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fit to drive. In determining this they may refer to an occupational therapist for further advice on driving performance.

Material Source:

Licensing Requirements for Drivers Aged 75 and Over Information Sheet. QLD Department of Transport and Main Roads: TRB Forms Area S5041 V01 Jul 2017.

[https://www.support.transport.qld.gov.au/qt/formsdat.nsf/forms/S5041/\\$file/S5041.pdf](https://www.support.transport.qld.gov.au/qt/formsdat.nsf/forms/S5041/$file/S5041.pdf)

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