

## Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Driving



### Why is it unsafe for someone with dementia to drive?

- Difficulty processing information.
- Becomes lost or may feel disoriented in familiar places.
- Less alert to things happening around them.
- Difficulty with problem solving and decision-making.
- Difficulty in completing multiple tasks at once.
- Become less coordinated.
- Difficulty judging distance and space.
- May drive too slowly.
- Signals incorrectly or does not signal.
- Stops in the middle of traffic for no reason.
- May have increase in accidents (look for new “dings” on the vehicle).
- Drifts into other lanes or drives on the wrong side of the road.
- Becomes irritated or anxious while driving.
- May have difficulty seeing pedestrians.
- Has difficulty with turns and lane changes.

It is important to remember that a diagnosis of dementia does not mean a person cannot drive safely. Someone who has been diagnosed in the early stages may still be able to drive.

However, dementia is a progressive disease which impacts memory, visual-spatial disorientation, cognitive functioning and other skills it takes to drive safely.

Most individuals associate driving as a form of independence and losing that privilege can often be upsetting.

Although some individuals recognize when it is time to give up driving, others may have a difficult time assessing their own skills and may insist on still driving even when it has become unsafe.

### How You Can Help

#### Observe Behavioral Signals

- Do they have difficulty judging distance and space?
- Do they have difficulty in completing multiple tasks?
- Do they have difficulty with processing information?
- Do they have difficulty with decision-making?

#### Involve the individual living with dementia in discussions

- Encourage them to discuss their own concerns openly with you.
- In early on-set dementia, involve the individual with discussion on when it is appropriate for them to stop driving.
- Try to establish guidelines early on when and how to limit driving.
- If the individual is reluctant to discuss or stop driving, you may need to reach out to their PCP to have a discussion during their next appointment.

#### Help Make Arrangements for Alternative Transportation

- Family and friends can be extremely helpful with bringing them to appointments, shopping, church, etc.
- Senior and special needs transportation services may be available in your area.
- Obtain information on local resources that could deliver items such as meals on wheels.

**For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.**