



Driving and dementia

Information sheet

Like working, a dementia mate wareware diagnosis doesn't necessarily mean you'll need to stop driving straight away but you'll need to stop driving at some point.

Dementia mate wareware can affect driving ability including difficulties with:

- finding your way around
- remembering which way to turn
- judging the distance from other cars and objects
- judging the speed of other cars
- reaction time
- hand-eye coordination.

It's best to discuss your driving with your GP or primary health care practitioner. They may refer you to an [occupational therapist](#) to do a full assessment of your capability to continue to drive safely, or you can contact them directly.

It's important to let your car insurance company know of your diagnosis to make sure you will still be covered if you continue to drive.

If you aren't sure about your driving ability you might like to ask a friend, whānau member or local driving instructor what they think about your driving skills. The most important thing is your safety and the safety of others.

When to stop driving

At some point you will need to stop driving. Many people decide to give up their license voluntarily but sometimes a friend or whānau member, or your health practitioner, will recommend a person should stop driving.

Some people find giving up driving very difficult. Your car may be an important part of your independence, and without it your life will change. For many people, losing the ability to drive means a loss of self-esteem and freedom. If so, you may feel angry, frustrated or upset about this change.

Others find benefits in no longer driving. They find alternatives are less stressful than driving, it can be cheaper than running a car and they enjoy the scenery from the passenger seat. In 2022, the AA estimated the costs of running a vehicle at around \$22 per day (Age Concern) for a new small car. These costs could cover the cost of alternative transport options such as a taxi or a companion driving service such as [Driving Miss Daisy](#) or [Freedom](#). When you stop driving you might find it harder to make social trips, such as visiting friends or whānau, attending functions, parties or your favourite hobbies. Try to find ways to keep doing these things by:

- asking a whānau member or friend to give you a lift
- using buses, trains or taxis
- walking – also good for exercise
- use home delivery services for food and medical prescriptions.

The Total Mobility Scheme provides subsidised (half price) taxi services to people who have an impairment that prevents them from driving. There are some variations in the scheme from region to region to reflect local differences, more information is available at this website <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/total-mobility-scheme>. Your local Alzheimers organisation (0800 004 001) can help you to access this scheme.

For more helpful information on dementia mate wareware and driving visit the [New Zealand Land Transport website](#) for its factsheet.

More resources

- [Medical driving assessments](#)
- To find a [driving assessment occupational therapist in your area](#)
- For [comprehensive information on dementia and driving](#) see the information on the Dementia NZ website
- [Life without a Car](#) – Age Concern