



Keeping on the go: Driving safely as you age



Driving and
stroke

Canada



Meet Ramman...

Ramman is 79 years old and has recently had a stroke causing limited movement in his right arm and leg. As a result, Ramman uses his left arm and leg to drive his vehicle. He is now wondering:

Should I continue driving?

Check with your provincial or territorial government on how long you must wait to drive following a stroke. You may need to be retested before you get behind the wheel again.

The information in this brochure is intended for educational purpose only. It does not and should not replace the advice or treatment from a health care professional. Never disregard professional health care advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this brochure.



How might a stroke affect safe driving?

The effects of a stroke are different for each person. Some of the effects of a stroke may interfere with your ability to drive safely. For example:

- **Vision:** You may experience changes such as double vision or reduced peripheral vision.
- **Visual-perceptual:** You may have difficulty recognizing objects.
- **Motor:** You may have difficulty controlling movements.
- **Sensory:** You may have difficulty sensing movement, touch, or you may neglect one side.
- **Cognitive:** You may have impulsive behaviour, difficulties with judgement, memory or coping with distractions.



Warning signs of unsafe driving

- You have difficulty turning the steering wheel, applying the brake or gas pedal.
- You do not notice people or other vehicles on one side.
- You feel frustrated, angry or confused while driving.
- You have difficulty staying in your lane or you drift across lane markings, into other lanes.
- You find it difficult to think clearly about the traffic around you.
- You get lost in familiar areas.
- You have had several close calls or minor accidents.

If these warning signs reflect your situation, maybe it is time to make some changes to your driving strategies and have your driving evaluated.



Safe driving strategies

All drivers find themselves in risky driving situations. Here are some strategies that can be used to reduce the risk:

Strategies to reduce the effects of a stroke on driving

- Have regular medical checkups and ask your medical doctor about your ability to return to driving.
- Driver rehabilitation may be recommended to help you regain your driving skills.
- Vehicle modifications such as a left-sided gas pedal may be recommended.





For more information

Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists: www.aded.net

Canada's Road Safety Strategy 2015: www.crss-2015.ccmta.ca

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists: www.caot.ca
www.olderdriversafety.ca

Canadian Automobile Association: www.caa.ca

Canadian Stroke Network: www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca

Heart and Stroke Foundation: www.heartandstroke.com



Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the *National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers* outlines a vision and directions for action for promoting safe driving among older drivers in Canada.

Canada's Road Safety Strategy 2015 outlines a framework of best practices to address major road safety challenges.

PHAC wishes to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists in the production of this brochure.

Également disponible en français sous le titre :
Restez sur la bonne voie : Conduisez prudemment tout en prenant de l'âge — La conduite automobile après un accident vasculaire cérébral

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors
Toll-Free: 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)
TTY: 1-800-926-9105

General strategies

- Choose a vehicle that is easier to drive, such as one with an automatic transmission or power options like adjustable seats.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition.
- Make sure your seat, steering wheel and mirrors are properly adjusted.
- Limit driving at night, in bad weather, during rush hour or on limited access highways.
- Be careful when changing lanes, making left-hand turns or merging into traffic.
- Maintain a safe following distance.
- Take breaks if you are driving a long distance.
- Have regular medical checkups.
- Make sure you know how your medications might affect your ability to drive safely.

You can also seek support and information from others, including family members, medical doctors, occupational therapists, certified driver rehabilitation specialists.

- An occupational therapist or a certified driver rehabilitation specialist can evaluate your driving ability, develop programs to improve safe driving habits or help you find alternative transportation.
- A driver information session or refresher course may be useful.



Driving retirement

There may come a time when you no longer feel that you are safe to drive or you have been told that you can no longer drive. Before that time comes, make a personal transportation plan. Planning for driving retirement should begin before you stop driving. Here are some strategies to help:

- Become familiar and comfortable with alternative transportation options.
- Collect information on local transportation options.
- Check the Internet or contact your municipal government to learn more about transportation services in your area.

Remember: Don't hesitate to ask for help from family, friends or neighbours.



Ramman's decision

Ramman had a formal driving assessment and is now receiving driver rehabilitation from an occupational therapist.

The occupational therapist recommended assistive technology for his car and is teaching him how to use it safely.

What strategies will you use?

