



KEEPING ON THE GO

Driving safely
as you age



Meet Marie-Claude...



Marie-Claude has just celebrated her 68th birthday. She has lived with diabetes for ten years and is finding it increasingly difficult to control her blood sugar level. Marie-Claude has heard diabetes can pose risks when driving.

She is now wondering:
Should I continue driving?

How might diabetes affect safe driving?

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

- > **Blood sugar levels:** Varying blood sugar levels may make you feel sleepy, dizzy, confused and less alert. Low blood sugar levels may result in seizure or loss of consciousness.
- > **Vision:** You may experience blurred vision or a sudden loss of vision. Diabetic retinopathy or cataract formation can cause you to see dark spots in your visual field.
- > **Sensory:** Nerve damage may cause pain or loss of feeling in your hands, legs and feet.

Warning signs of unsafe driving

- > You have difficulty staying alert and oriented.
- > You have difficulty operating the gas pedal or brake due to pain or loss of feeling in your feet.
- > You have difficulty fastening your seatbelt or operating controls.
- > You have difficulty seeing objects or people.
- > You have difficulty seeing at night, in the rain, or in bad weather.

If these warning signs reflect your situation, it may be 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 diabetes on driving

- > Always carry your blood sugar meter.
- > Always carry snacks.
- > Monitor your blood sugar level routinely.
- > Have regular medical checkups and yearly eye examinations.
- > People with diabetes who routinely monitor their blood sugar levels have fewer motor vehicle violations.

Driving and diabetes

Having diabetes does not necessarily mean you should not drive. It does mean you should be aware of how diabetes might affect your driving.



For more information

Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists: www.aded.net

Canada's Road Safety Strategy: <https://roadsafetystrategy.ca/en/strategy>

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
www.caot.ca

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists – CarFit Program
<https://caot.ca/site/prac-res/carfit>

Canadian Automobile Association – Senior Drivers: <https://www.caa.ca/driving-safely/senior-drivers/>

Canadian Diabetes Association:
www.diabetes.ca

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 professional. Never disregard professional health advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this brochure.

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Également disponible en français sous le titre:
Rester en mouvement : Conduire en toute sécurité en vieillissant - Conduire et le diabète

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www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors
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General strategies

- › Choose a vehicle that is easy 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 times you feel less confident. This could be at night, in the rain or bad weather, during rush hour, on highways or isolated roads.
- › Be careful when changing lanes, making left-hand turns or merging into traffic.
- › Maintain a safe following distance.
- › Take breaks every few hours if you are driving a long distance.
- › Choose a parking or space where it is easier to park.
- › Have regular medical checkups.
- › Make sure you know how your medications might affect your ability to drive safely.

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

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 in your community.
- › Collect information on local transportation options.
- › Check the Internet or contact your municipal government to learn more about transportation services in your area.

Marie-Claude's decision

Armed with the information regarding diabetes and driving, Marie-Claude has scheduled a visit with her medical doctor and optometrist. She will ask for a referral to an occupational therapist for a driving assessment, and seek information about assessing her sugar levels. From these evaluations, Marie-Claude feels that she can make an informed decision regarding her driving.

What strategies will you use?

