

News For Older Americans

Getting There When You No Longer Drive

(NAPSA)—As we get older, chances are we—and our family members—will be faced with several important decisions about driving. Specifically, what do we do if it is no longer safe for us to drive? How can we still remain independent and engaged in life's activities?

Experts say one of the best ways for a person to ease the transition from driver to passenger is to put a plan in place before it is needed. When creating the plan for yourself or another family member, you may want to consider the following:

- Friends, neighbors, relatives or caregivers can often provide an alternative means of transportation to appointments or social events.

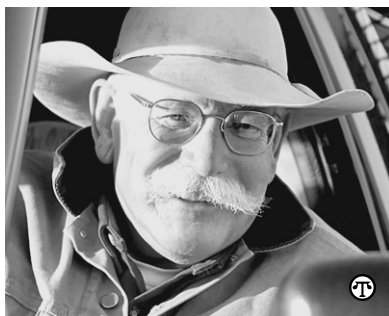
Experts say other family members will be more likely to help if caregivers make specific requests and schedule appointments at times that work for those requested to help.

- Reduce the need to drive. Arrange to have prescription medicines, groceries and meals delivered, reducing the need to go shopping.

- Look into dial-a-ride and elderly and disabled transportation services that provide door-to-door transportation, often by appointment. Many places offer van service for a nominal fee through a church or nonprofit organization.

- Taxis. Depending on their rates, taxis may be a cost-effective alternative.

Some taxi companies will set up accounts for regular users so they can have access to transportation without worrying about payment.



To ease the transition from driver to nondriver, put a plan in place before it is needed.

- Public transportation. Practice using public transportation before it becomes a necessity. Keep in mind that public transportation may be difficult or impossible to use for some older adults with physical or cognitive difficulties who must limit their driving.

According to Maureen Mohyde, director of gerontology at The Hartford Financial Services Group, "Driving is about more than transportation. It's a symbol of independence and freedom. But having frank discussions about driver safety early on—well before it becomes a problem—can reinforce safe practices."

To help with this transition, Mohyde's company and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's AgeLab have created a free 24-page guide called "We Need to Talk: Family Conversations with Older Drivers." The guide offers practical information that can help family members advise a loved one on whether it is time to limit—or even give up—driving.

To order a copy of the guide, visit the Web site at www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers.