



**American  
Stroke  
Association.**  
A division of the  
American Heart Association.

let's talk about  
**STROKE**



**Recovery**

let's talk about

# Driving After Stroke

Driving is often a major concern after a stroke. It's not unusual for stroke survivors to want to drive. Getting around after a stroke is important — but safety is even more important.

## Can I drive after a stroke?

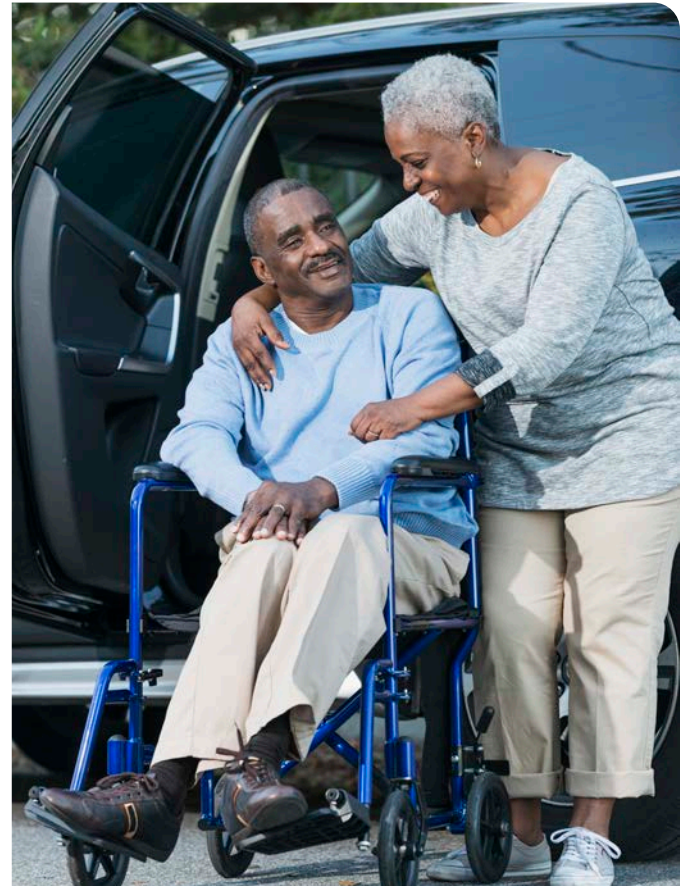
Injury to the brain may change how you do things. Many stroke survivors may develop some type of cognitive changes after their stroke. This may include problems with memory, judgment, problem-solving or a combination of these. Some survivors may also experience trouble with vision due to their stroke. Certain medications used for management of pain, seizures or other post-stroke related conditions can also affect your level of alertness and may impact your ability to drive. So before you drive again, think carefully about how these changes may affect safety for you, your family and others.

## How can a stroke affect the way I drive?

Often, survivors are unaware of all the effects of their stroke and their impact on their driving abilities. You may feel you're able to drive even when it's not safe for you to do so. It's important before you begin driving again that you've been cleared to do so by your health care professional. Driving against your doctor's advice can be dangerous and may be illegal. In some cases, your doctor may have to notify your state that you've been advised not to drive.

If you or someone you know has experienced any of these warning signs of unsafe driving, please consider taking a driving test:

- Drives too fast or too slow for road conditions or posted speeds
- Needs help or instructions from passengers
- Doesn't observe signs or signals
- Makes slow or poor distance decisions
- Gets easily frustrated or confused



- Often gets lost, even in familiar areas
- Has accidents or close calls
- Drifts across lane markings into other lanes

## How can I tell if it's safe for me to drive?

- Talk to your doctor or occupational therapist. They will offer a professional opinion about how your stroke might change your ability to drive. Contact your State Department of Motor Vehicles and ask for the Office of Driver Safety. Ask what rules apply to individuals who've had a stroke.
- Take a driving test. Professionals such as driver rehabilitation specialists can evaluate your driving ability. You'll get a behind-the-wheel evaluation and be tested for vision perception, functional ability, reaction time, judgment and cognitive abilities (thinking and problem solving). Contact community rehabilitation centers or your local State Department of Motor Vehicles office.

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- Enroll in a driver's training program. For a fee, you may receive a driving assessment, classroom instruction and suggestions for modifying your vehicle (if necessary). These programs are often available through rehab centers.
- Ask your family if they've seen changes in your communication, thinking, judgment or behavior that should be evaluated before you drive again. Family members often see what others don't.

### What if I can't drive after a stroke?

- Even if you're not able to drive your vehicle as it was before your stroke, the right modifications can help you regain confidence and independence on the road. Contact a rehabilitation specialist in your area to help assess your ability to operate a motor vehicle. Look for certified driver rehabilitation specialists who can also evaluate whether modifications will be necessary or helpful.
  - If you need help paying for recommended modifications, state and other government programs can help. For example, the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association can help you explore mobility equipment options, locate dealers and funding sources and more.



- If safety demands you put down your car keys, there are still many resources available to help you get around. If your community has public transportation, it may also offer free paratransit services for those with disabilities. Many communities also have voucher or volunteer-based transportation programs that offer low- or no-cost transportation. To find more transportation options, search by your location through the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center ([nadtc.org](http://nadtc.org)).

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [stroke.org](http://stroke.org) to learn more about stroke or find local support groups.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Stroke Connection* e-news for stroke survivors and caregivers at [StrokeConnection.org](http://StrokeConnection.org).
- 3 Connect with others who have also had an experience with stroke by joining our Support Network at [stroke.org/SupportNetwork](http://stroke.org/SupportNetwork).

### Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

**When should I test my driving ability?**

**Is my driving restriction permanent?**

### MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke](http://stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke) to learn more.