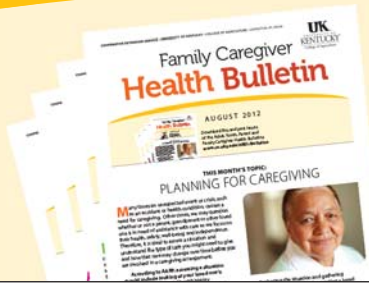


# Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



JULY 2014

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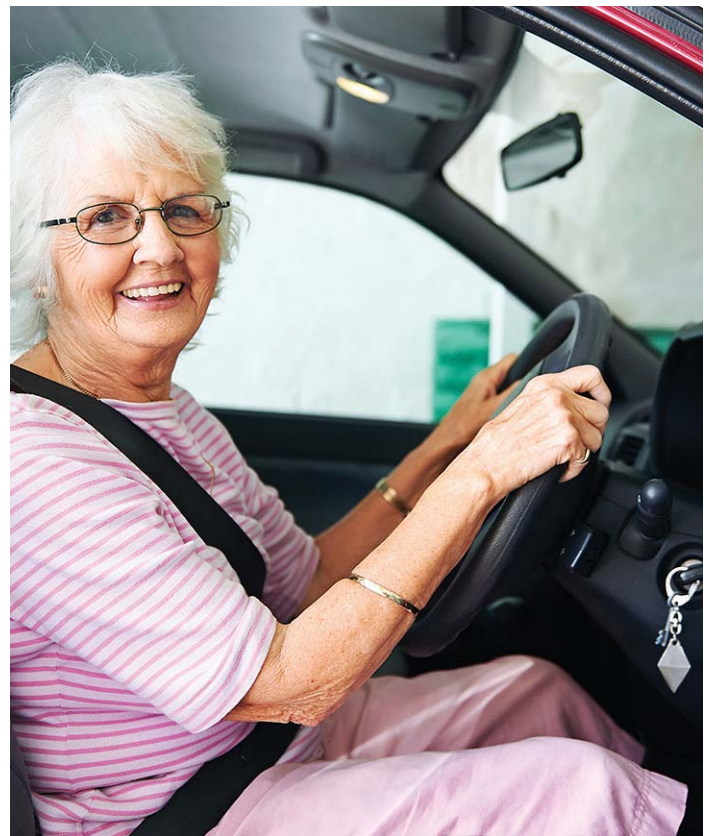
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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

# TAKING AWAY THE CAR KEYS

**T**he number of older drivers is on the rise. According to the AARP, the number of adult children concerned about their parent's driving ability and safety on the road is increasing. Yet, many families find it hard to start a conversation about taking away car keys. Caregivers worry about the negative reactions or may not know about or have access to alternative transportation for the older driver.

For many, driving represents independence and a lifeline to the world. Caregivers therefore fear that taking such autonomy away will cause hard feelings and contribute toward dependence and decline. According to Amy Goyer, Family and Caregiving expert from the AARP, it is important to keep in mind that having conversations and following through with actions keep an older driver's best interest and safety in mind. It is the best way you can support and help an older adult.



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# *When treated with love, consideration, empathy and respect, most older drivers will agree to limit or stop driving.*

Continued from page 1

## **What is the right way to have the conversation and when should you have it?**

The AARP suggests having conversations often and before there is a problem. Questions to ask include:

- What if you hurt yourself or someone else?
- What will happen when you can't drive anymore?
- How can we keep you driving for as long as possible?

It is important that older adults recognize the consequences of unsafe driving, which includes not only harm to themselves, but to others on the roads and sidewalks. There are many programs being offered through agencies such as the AARP and private insurance companies that help assess safe driving skills and provide driving courses. Early discussions also allow you to brainstorm solutions to alternative transportation and make preliminary plans, which can help ease an older person's mind. For transportation options in your community, contact your local Area Agency on Aging or your county Extension Agent for Family Consumer Sciences.

It is also important to be aware of some of the signs of changes in driving skills:

- Distracted driving
- Hitting curbs
- Trouble merging lanes
- Poor judgment
- Failing to follow traffic signs, signals and rules

Getting the facts and educating yourself about what is going on in the car and on the road puts you in a better position to identify problems and suggest solutions.

When you are ready to tackle the conversation, Argie Allen, Director of Clinical Training at Drexel University's Couple and Family Therapy Department, suggests making a plan that allows you to "empower versus disempower" an adult driver. For example, Dr. Allen encourages families, when applicable, to provide multiple options that allow for a gradual decrease in driving. You may encourage less driving at night and to avoid driving in bad weather or rush hour traffic. You may suggest that you can start driving the older adult to run errands or to an appointment, and slowly you move to providing transportation or making arrangements for transportation a little bit more and your parent driving a little bit less.

When treated with love, consideration, empathy and respect, most older drivers will agree to limit or stop driving. For the drivers who refuse, it can be helpful to seek support from a medical provider or contact a motor vehicle licensing authority, especially if you think the safety of the person or others is at risk.

AARP joined forces with the Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence to provide various information and sources about safe driving and old age. For more information, access: [www.safedrivingforalifetime.com](http://www.safedrivingforalifetime.com). You can also call your local Area Agency on Aging or county Extension Agent for Family Consumer Sciences.

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*Conversations and following through with actions keep an older driver's best interest and safety in mind.*

Family Caregiver  
**Health Bulletin**

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