



## **Driving, Medication & Medic Alert + Safe Return**

### **Driving**

Regardless of age, driving is equated with freedom and independence. When we tell someone they can't drive, we are taking away that independence. As early onset Alzheimer's progresses, the day will come when your loved one should not be driving any type of motor vehicle. As cognitive abilities and reaction time decreases, there are many things that can go wrong very quickly when they are driving. This could lead to major injury for your loved one and others that are on the road. The following are some of the problems that can begin to occur with respect to driving:

- Having accidents or near misses
- Failing to observe traffic signals
- Delayed and slow reflexes resulting in slow or poor decisions
- Driving at inappropriate speeds
- Getting traffic tickets
- Forgetting how to get to their destination
- Places that were once familiar are no longer unfamiliar
- Becoming confused and angry

There are some people that will voluntarily give up driving because they become scared after getting lost or having an accident. However, many people will refuse to give up driving once it becomes necessary. Below are some suggestions that can work to limit and give up driving:

- Have the doctor write a "do not drive" prescription
- Disable the car by removing the distributor cap or battery
- Park the car at a neighbor or family member's home
- Substitute the person's driver's license with a photo identification card (do this in addition to disabling or removing the car)

### **Medication Safety**

Medication management is critically important for the individual with early onset Alzheimer's disease. It is recommended that even in the early stages of the disease, you as care partner, manage the dispensing of medications. However, even for the care partner, managing the medications along with all of the other daily responsibilities can be overwhelming. There are several things that can be done to ease the dispensing and tracking of medications:



- Have a day-of-the-week pill dispenser that has a.m./p.m. compartments. Ask the pharmacist to fill the dispenser with the medications. As the care partner, you encounter many distractions during the day, so having the pharmacist fill the dispenser can eliminate possible medication errors
- If you choose to fill the medication dispensers, please do so at a quiet time when you can be focused and alert.
- Keep a daily log that's checked off when medications are taken (See Medication Checklist)
- Make a record of when each medication should be filled. This helps in two ways: (1) get the prescription refilled prior to it running out; (2) helps you to track safe dosing.
- Take the pills to your loved one and watch them take the pills.

### **MedicAlert + Safe Return**

Three out of five individuals with Alzheimer's will wander during the course of the disease. MedicAlert + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return is a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's or a related dementia that wander or have a medical emergency. They provide 24-hour assistance, no matter when or where the person is reported missing.

If an individual with Alzheimer's or a related dementia wanders and becomes lost, caregivers can call the 24-hour emergency response line to report it. A community support network will be activated, including local Alzheimer's Association chapters and law enforcement agencies, to help reunite the family or caregiver with the person who wandered. With this enhanced service, critical medical information will be provided to emergency responders when needed.

To get more information and to enroll for the MedicAlert + Safe Return program, please call 1-888-572-8566 or register online at: [medicalert.org/safereturn](http://medicalert.org/safereturn).