

Driving and Stroke

ADED – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists

Driving is viewed not just as a ‘privilege’, but also as a necessity. When a stroke occurs it can affect the skills necessary for independent driving. A majority of stroke survivors can return to independent driving. The goal is to maintain safe and independent driving for as long as possible.

Adaptive equipment is frequently used to assist drivers when there are physical problems. A spinner knob can be attached to the steering wheel to allow controlled steering with the use of one hand. Other adaptive equipment may be used if one is unable to use their right foot for the gas and brake. Training is essential with any equipment to be safe with one’s new adapted driving method.

Warning signs to look for are:

- Inappropriate driving speeds (too fast or too slow)
- Needs help or instructions from passengers
- Doesn’t observe signs or signals
- Slow or poor decisions (poor judge of distances, too close to other cars)
- Easily frustrated or confused
- Pattern of getting lost, even in familiar areas
- Accidents or near misses
- Drifting across lane markings, into other lanes
- Hitting both pedals with one foot by accident

If you see any of the above warning signs in another driver, they may need a driver evaluation. Then again, if you see any of the above warning signs in your own driving (or if someone brings it to your attention), YOU may need a driver evaluation. A driver rehabilitation specialist can provide a comprehensive evaluation to determine your ability to drive.

This assessment should include:

- Vision
- Perception
- Functional ability
- Reaction time
- Behind-the-wheel evaluation

