

Driving and dementia

FACT SHEET FROM THE SWEDISH DEMENTIA CENTRE

Bilkörning och demens • faktablad på engelska

The brain's ability affect driving

Dementia is a diagnosis for a range of symptoms which are the result of illnesses and injuries in the brain. The symptoms make it harder to think, plan and communicate.

Forgetfulness and difficulties in orientating yourself are usually the early signs. As the illness develops gradually it is difficult to notice it at an early stage.

Warning signs among drivers

Many persons with dementia do not have great difficulties in dealing with clutch levers and pedals. The symptoms of dementia initially become noticeable in stressful situations which involve processing a large amount of information and making quick decisions. Such a situation can be driving in heavy traffic or a road crossing.

A dementia illness can, at an early stage, manifest itself in various ways in the traffic. Warning signs include:

- not adjusting the speed to the traffic
- forgetting to switch off blinkers or windshield cleaners
- not paying attention to other road users
- forgetting to switch off blinkers or windshield cleaners

Dementia is a part of many accidents

Research shows that more than half of the drivers who are killed whilst driving and are older than 65 have changes in the brain which indicate a dementia illness. It is likely that most of them have not shown any signs of serious symptoms. A driver with a dementia illness does not only risk his/her own life but also that of others.

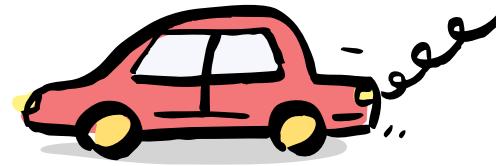
Early diagnosis is important

A doctor should be contacted immediately if dementia is suspected. It is essential to start an examination in a timely manner in order to receive the correct diagnosis, assistance and treatment.

Doctors examine the medical barriers

The doctor also investigates if there are medical barriers for driving. When this is deemed to be necessary the doctor is responsible for notifying this to the Swedish Transport

Agency who then decides on the continued possession of a driving licence. If the person in question is of the opinion that the Swedish Transport Agency's decision is wrong it may be appealed in a court.



What does the law state?

In principle, driving is prohibited if you have been diagnosed with dementia. In exceptional cases those with a mild form of dementia are permitted to retain their driving licence for a private car, if the symptoms are not assessed as jeopardising traffic safety. In such cases the doctor should re-examine the person's suitability to drive within one year.

A sensitive issue

The restriction on not being able to continue driving can be a sensitive issue, concerning self-esteem and the freedom to travel where you please. Therefore, the individual who is directly impacted and his/her family should be involved in the discussion on driving and the possession of a driving licence.

Additional information

The Swedish Transport Agency: www.transportstyrelsen.se

The Swedish Transport Administration's regulations on the change in regulations (VVFS 2008:158) on medical requirements for the possession of a driving licence.

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Additional information sheets in different languages are available on the Swedish Dementia Centre's website:

www.demenscentrum.se/Faktablad



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