

## **Driving with AMD**

For many, a driver's license symbolizes independence. The loss or restriction of driving privileges can be a crushing blow to those with AMD.

In California, the goal of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is to keep drivers licensed for as long as it is safe for them to continue operating a motor vehicle. In addition to a written and driving test, there is a vision test necessary for license renewal. In the eye test, you are asked to read a line on a chart with both your eyes open and then another line with each eye individually. If you wear glasses, you may use them for the eye test, but your license will be restricted to 'must wear corrective lenses'.

The visual acuity screening for a license in California is 20/40 with both eyes tested together, and 20/40 in one eye and 20/70 at least, in the other eye. If you qualify at the screening level, no further documentation or testing is required.

If you have difficulty passing the vision test at the DMV office, you will be given a Report of Vision Examination (DL62) and referred to your

eye doctor who will retest your vision. In completing the form, your doctor will certify that your vision has been evaluated within the last six months, and will reveal any vision conditions that may affect your eyesight. If your eye doctor is not able to correct your vision to 20/40 or better, the doctor must also provide additional information such as the field of vision, blind spots, or scotomas that impact vision. No one with vision less than 20/200 in at least one eye will have their license renewed. Based on several factors, including the exam results from your doctor, the DMV makes the final decision whether to renew a driver's license. Your eye doctor alone cannot cause you to lose your license or to keep it.

Even if you are given the green light to maintain your license by the DMV, there are other factors to consider. AMD affects central vision and it may be harder to read street or traffic signs. Driving at night can compound any vision issues. And sometimes driving during the day is difficult because of sun glare. Bad weather like rain or fog can add to the difficulty in safe driving.

To make the most of safe driving, try to stick to routes that you know and avoid freeways or certain roadways if you are no longer comfortable driving at high speeds. Making left turns across traffic lanes can be especially nerve-wracking, when it becomes more difficult to judge the speed and distance of incoming traffic.

If you have been diagnosed with cataract in addition to AMD, talk to your eye doctor about the possibility of having cataract removal surgery. If the damage to your retina is not too advanced, you may find that your eyesight improves significantly with the replacement of your lens.

Insurance companies like AAA and senior groups like AARP offer defensive driving courses for seniors. Consider asking your doctor for a referral to an occupational therapist or a driver rehabilitation specialist who can assess driving safety and offer useful tips for driving with reduced vision.

Finally, talk to your family about your concerns. You can assume they are equally concerned about your ability to drive safely. Don't wait until it is too late to make plans for your life without a driver's license.

Visit [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov) to learn about local transit services.

Companies like Uber, Lyft, and GoGoGrandparent offer private pay transportation that many people rely on as a convenient way to get around.