TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY STATE OF MINNESOTA

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

SAFE DRIVING GUIDE

FOR DRIVERS 65+ AND FAMILIES





JULY 2025

GUIDEBOOK UPDATE

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01

INTRODUCTION

With aging comes wisdom and experience but also physical and cognitive changes that can affect driving. Many studies define “older drivers” as those 60 and up, but aging is different for everyone. Some may notice changes earlier, others much later—but we all experience them eventually.

As a person ages, their body slows down. Muscles get weaker, reflexes become slower, vision dims, and hearing lessens. The ability to look over one’s shoulder, jam on the brakes, and turn the steering wheel also decreases due to loss of strength, flexibility, and endurance. The brain takes longer to process and react to sensory information like sight, sound and touch. Sorting through background noise takes longer and more effort. These things can distract drivers from the task of driving. One study one study found that age-related changes can affect driving in ways similar to alcohol impairment.

Fortunately, with aging comes experience and a strong foundation of safe driving habits. Many older drivers are more likely to wear seatbelts, obey speed limits, and follow the rules of the road. The key is to balance that experience with a new awareness of how aging might affect driving and take steps to adjust.

This guide offers practical tips to help older adults stay safe behind the wheel. For example:

- **Left turns are higher-risk**—up to two-thirds of senior-involved fatal crashes happen during them.
- **Processing time slows**—take extra care when judging speed and distance.
- At **flashing yellow arrows**, wait for a green arrow if unsure.
- When possible, **make three right turns instead of one left**.
- **Use extra caution** when merging and be sure mirrors reduce blind spots.

Aging does not mean drivers need to give up their keys. It simply means they must be aware of how aging affects the body and mind. This guide is here to help drivers proactively apply safety measures to help them driver safely as their abilities change.



02

ENHANCING DRIVING LONGEVITY

As individuals age, safe and confident driving can become a concern. To help older adults maintain their driving skills and extend their time behind the wheel, it is essential to focus on several key strategies. The following are effective approaches that can assist those over 65 in driving longer and more safely.

Regular Health Check-ups

Maintaining good health is crucial for safe driving. Regular check-ups with healthcare providers can help identify and manage age-related health issues such as vision impairment, hearing loss, and chronic conditions like diabetes or hypertension.

Stay Physically Active

Physical fitness plays a significant role in driving ability. Engaging in regular exercise can improve strength, flexibility, and coordination, all of which are essential for operating a vehicle. Activities such as walking, swimming, or yoga can enhance overall physical health and help maintain the agility needed for safe driving.

Cognitive Health Maintenance

Cognitive function is critical for making quick decisions while driving. Seniors can support their brain health through activities that stimulate the mind, such as puzzles, reading, or learning new skills.

Practice Defensive Driving

Defensive driving techniques can significantly enhance safety on the road. Older drivers should consider taking a defensive driving course specifically designed for seniors.

Limit Driving in Challenging Conditions

As driving conditions change, older drivers should plan to limit their driving during challenging situations, such as at night, in inclement weather, or during peak traffic hours.

Utilize Technology

Modern vehicles are equipped with various safety features that can assist older drivers. Features such as backup cameras, lane departure warnings, and adaptive cruise control can enhance safety and ease of driving. Older drivers should acquaint themselves with these tools.

Stay Connected with Family and Friends

Maintaining social connections can provide emotional support and practical assistance. Family members can help by discussing driving concerns and offering to accompany seniors on trips.

Know When to Reassess Driving Ability

As drivers age, regular self-assessment can help identify any changes in skills or comfort levels. If driving becomes increasingly challenging, it may be time to consider alternative transportation options or limit driving to specific situations.

Driving is an essential aspect of independence for many older adults. By focusing on health, safety, and awareness, seniors can enhance their driving longevity and continue to enjoy the freedom of the road. Implementing these strategies can lead to safer driving experiences and a higher quality of life, allowing older adults to remain active and engaged in their communities.

03

MYTH BUSTERS

It's not uncommon for other drivers to see an older person driving and think about avoiding them. There are many myths about senior drivers. The information below is intended to help debunk them. Consider these commonly held beliefs:

Myth One:

Older People are Bad Drivers.

The assertion that older people are bad drivers is a common stereotype, but it is not necessarily true. Research indicates that while older drivers may experience declines in abilities such as reaction time and vision, they often compensate with greater experience and caution on the road. Many studies have shown that older adults tend to drive more safely than younger drivers, as they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as speeding or driving under the influence. Therefore, it is important to evaluate driving abilities on an individual basis rather than generalizing based on age.

In Minnesota drivers 65 and older account for 16.9 percent of all drivers. In 2024, 11.4 percent of traffic crashes in Minnesota were related to people 65 and older.

Myth Two:

Being 80 (or 90) Means It's Time to Stop Driving.

The belief that reaching the age of 80 or 90 automatically means it's time to stop driving is a common myth. While age can bring about changes in vision, physical or cognitive abilities, and general health that may affect driving skills, it is not a definitive indicator that one should cease driving altogether. Many older adults maintain their driving capabilities and continue to drive safely. It is important to assess individual health, driving skills, and comfort levels rather than making assumptions based solely on age. Regular evaluations and open discussions about driving can help determine the appropriateness of continuing to drive. Don't assume that someone must give up their keys just because they are older.

Myth Three:

I Can Still Drive Because I Haven't Been in a Crash.

It's a common misconception that a lack of car crashes indicates safe driving. However, safe driving encompasses more than just avoiding crashes. Factors such as adherence to traffic laws, awareness of surroundings, and the ability to respond to unexpected situations are crucial for ensuring safety on the road. It's important to continuously evaluate and improve driving skills, regardless of past experiences.

Myth Four:

You Need to Stop Driving Completely.

Myth four suggests that individuals must cease driving entirely, which is not always true. While circumstances may require reduced driving or alternative transportation options, it is not a blanket requirement for everyone. Many people can continue to drive safely with appropriate precautions and adaptations based on their specific situations. It is important to assess individual capabilities and consult with professionals if there are concerns about driving safety. "Older drivers can take steps to extend their driving years. The most common effective strategy is self-restricting based on when and where someone feels most comfortable driving and avoiding situations such as driving at night or in bad weather. In addition, there are several options for seniors who want to continue driving safely," says Kathy Woods, Rehabilitation Supervisor at Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Services. "They range from doing physical and mental exercise to taking defensive driving courses."

04

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

For older drivers with a medical condition – and for concerned caregivers or medical professionals – the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (Older Drivers | NHTSA) has several resources for safe driving and mobility. www.nhtsa.gov/Road-safety/older-drivers

These resources provide information about how medical conditions can affect driving, what to do if you notice certain warning signs, and where to learn more. These resources also provide information about transportation alternatives and how to get help with transportation.

Information on Driving with Medical Conditions

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Arthritis
- Cataracts
- Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Macular Degeneration
- Parkinson's Disease
- Sleep Apnea
- Stroke



05

NUTRITION + PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR INDIVIDUALS AGED 65 AND OLDER

As people age, maintaining proper nutrition and engaging in regular physical activity becomes increasingly important for overall health and well-being. Proper nutrition helps to support bodily functions, maintain a healthy weight, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Regular physical activity enhances mobility, strength, and balance, which are crucial for maintaining independence and quality of life. It's good to talk with a medical provider about a healthy diet or consult with a dietitian.

Older adults have specific nutrient requirements that may differ from younger individuals. For example, adequate intake of vitamins and minerals is essential for bone health, immune function, and cognitive health.

A balanced diet helps in managing weight, which can reduce the risk of obesity-related conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Good nutrition supports overall physical health, which is essential for driving.

Proper nutrition provides the energy needed for daily activities and helps maintain an active lifestyle. Driving requires physical and mental energy. A nutritious diet provides the necessary fuel to maintain energy levels throughout the day.

Proper nutrition also plays a vital role in maintaining cognitive health. Older drivers and caregivers can use the checklist below to check if they are keeping proper nutrition. Don't forget about hydration. Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated.

Nutrition Checklist

	YES	NO
I eat at least 3 meals daily	☐	☐
I eat dairy products most days	☐	☐
I eat 5 servings of vegetables most days	☐	☐
I changed the amount and/or type of food I eat due to a medical condition	☐	☐
I drink 6 to 8 cups of fluids most days	☐	☐
I usually have enough money to buy food	☐	☐
I have 3 or more glasses of beer, wine, or alcohol each day	☐	☐
I eat alone most of the time	☐	☐
I have teeth, mouth, or swallowing problems that make eating difficult	☐	☐
I have 3 or more different prescriptions or over-the-counter medications daily	☐	☐
I often shop, cook and/or feed myself	☐	☐
I take vitamin supplements	☐	☐
I have gained more than 11 pounds in the last 6 months	☐	☐

Always consult your physician before making any dietary or nutritional changes.

Importance of Physical Activity

Physical activity is particularly important for adults over 65 years of age, especially in relation to driving, for several key reasons.

- **First**, better physical fitness can help older adults manage the physical demands of driving. Some examples include turning the steering wheel, braking, and reacting quickly to unexpected situations.

- **Second**, exercise has been linked to better cognitive health, including improved attention, memory, enhance mood, reduce anxiety, and decision-making skills. These cognitive benefits are crucial for driving. Daily movement is important.

- **Next**, engaging in regular physical activity can enhance reflexes and reaction times. This is vital for driving, as it allows older adults to respond more effectively to sudden changes in traffic conditions or obstacles. Strength training exercises (such as with resistance bands or weights) is one way to maintain muscle mass.

- **Additionally**, physical activity can contribute to overall health, including eye health. Maintaining good vision is essential for safe driving as it helps drivers detect hazards and navigate effectively. Regular exercise can help manage or prevent chronic health issues such as arthritis, heart disease, and diabetes, which can affect driving ability. By maintaining better health, older adults can reduce the likelihood of health-related driving impairments. Getting regular moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., brisk walking, swimming) is important.

- **And,** physical activity can also increase social engagement. Participating in physical activities often involves social interaction, which can help combat feelings of isolation. A more active social life can lead to increased confidence and comfort when driving, as older adults may feel more connected to their community. Joining classes or groups that promote physical activity can enhance both motivation and enjoyment.

- **Finally**, staying active can help older adults maintain their independence, including the ability to drive. This independence is crucial for accessing essential services, social activities, and maintaining a quality lifestyle. Regular exercise helps to improve strength, flexibility, and balance, which are vital for daily activities and reducing the risk of falls.



Exercise for Mature Drivers

The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence and the MIT AgeLab conducted research to better understand how exercise can enhance certain aspects of flexibility and range of motion for drivers age 50+. Research included a study in which drivers were asked to perform an exercise program daily for eight to 10 weeks. The exercise program focused on four areas: Strength, Flexibility, Range of Motion and Coordination. Findings showed that these exercises enhanced specific driving tasks.

Examples of the types of exercises research participants did as part of the study:

STRENGTH EXERCISES

Biceps Curls

Squats

RANGE OF MOTION EXERCISES

Back Stretch

Heel Drops

FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

Chest and Shoulder Expansion

Shoulder Stretch

COORDINATION EXERCISES

Soccer Kicks

Lateral Steps



In summary, physical activity plays a vital role in maintaining safe and confident driving for adults over age 65. By enhancing physical fitness, cognitive function, and overall health, regular exercise supports the ability to drive and promotes a greater sense of independence and well-being.

Information on exercises designed specifically for this purpose is provided in the appendix section of this booklet.

Consult a Professional: Before starting any new exercise program, consult with a healthcare provider or a fitness professional, especially if there are existing health concerns.

By prioritizing nutrition and physical activity, individuals aged 65 and older can significantly enhance their quality of life, maintain independence, and promote longevity.

20 minutes of exercise per day has been shown to be helpful!

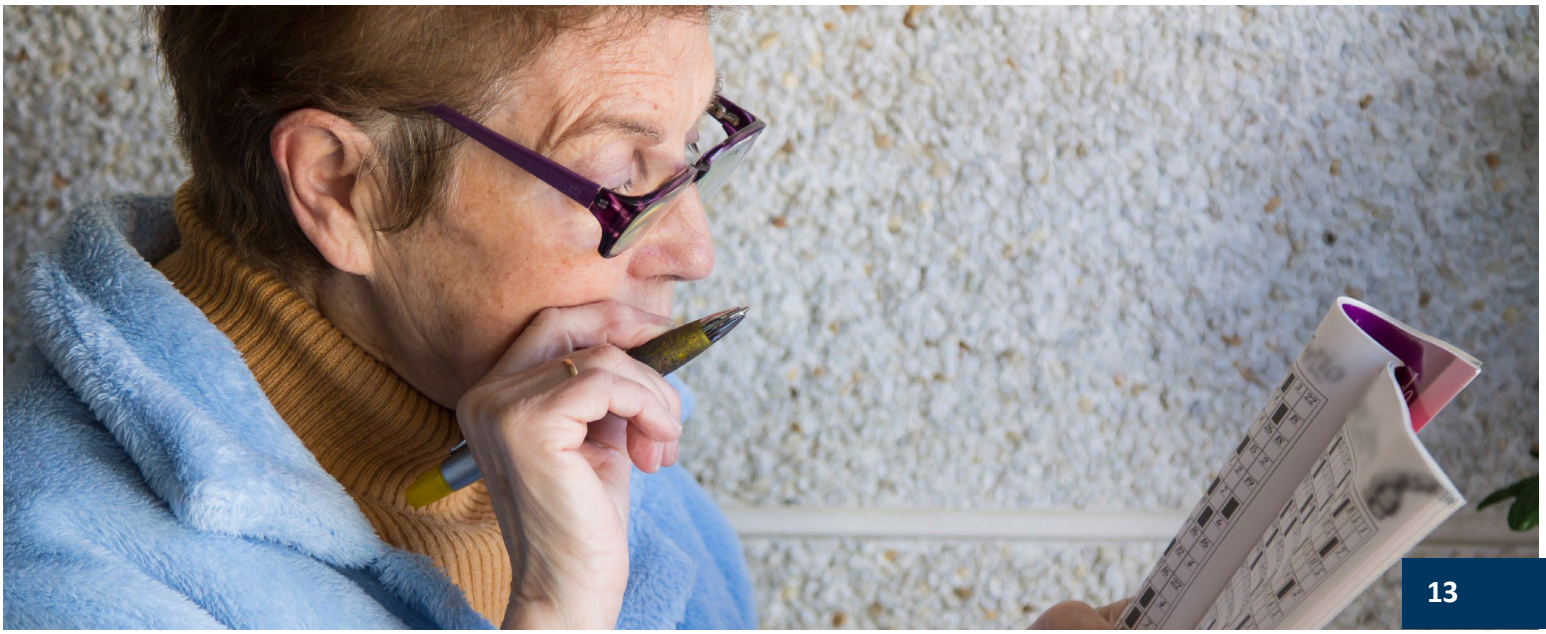
06

STRENGTHENING YOUR BRAIN

Exercise is not just physical – people should also exercise their brain. The brain can be kept active by doing activities like Sudoku or crossword puzzles. By exercising the brain through these games, older adults can maintain the mental sharpness required to navigate the complexities of driving.

Driving requires cognitive skills – the ability to sort information and respond to it. Brain exercises can help maintain brain health. Strengthening our brain driving capabilities indeed necessitates the development of cognitive skills, which involve sorting information and responding effectively.

Engaging in brain exercises can be beneficial for maintaining overall brain health. Additionally, it is advisable to consult with your doctor to ensure that your vision and hearing are functioning well, as these senses play a crucial role in cognitive processing and response.



07

MEDICATIONS + DRIVING

More than 75 percent of drivers aged 65 and older report using one or more medications, yet less than a third are aware of how these medications may impact their driving abilities. It is crucial for individuals in this age group to engage in discussions with their healthcare providers, such as doctors or pharmacists, about medications they are taking and any side effects that could impair their driving, such as fatigue or decreased mental alertness. If medications make you feel tired or not mentally alert, **DO NOT DRIVE**.

Over-the-counter medications, supplements, and herbal products may also have side effects that affect driving performance. For more detailed information, consult the "Are Your Medicines Increasing Your Risk of a Fall or a Car Crash" fact sheet provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which can be accessed at https://www.cdc.gov/older-adult-drivers/medicine/index.html. This resource can help you better understand the risks associated with medications and driving.





Herbal Remedies that Can Affect Driving

- Melatonin
- Valerian
- St. John's Work
- Cannabidiol (BVD)
- Lavender
- Passion Flower
- GABA
- Chamomile

These are only some of the common herbal medications that can affect mental status and driving

Prescription Medications

Common types of prescription medications that may impair driving include:

- **Benzodiazepines** *(e.g., diazepam, lorazepam)* can cause drowsiness, dizziness, and impaired coordination.
- **Antidepressants** *(especially tricyclics, e.g., amitriptyline)* may lead to sedation and cognitive impairment.
- **Antihistamines** *(first-generation, e.g., diphenhydramine)* often cause drowsiness and reduced alertness.
- **Opioids** *(e.g., oxycodone, morphine)* can lead to sedation, dizziness, and impaired judgment.
- **Muscle relaxants** *(e.g., carisoprodol, cyclobenzaprine)* may cause drowsiness and decreased motor skills.
- **Antipsychotics** *(e.g., quetiapine, risperidone)* can impair cognitive function and motor skills.
- **Blood pressure medications** *(e.g., beta-blockers)* may cause fatigue or dizziness in some individuals.
- **Seizure medications** *(e.g., phenytoin, carbamazepine)* can affect coordination and reaction times.

Over-the-Counter Medications

Several over-the-counter medications can impair driving abilities, particularly in older adults. Here are some common categories and examples:

- **Antihistamines** First-generation antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and chlorpheniramine, can cause drowsiness, dizziness, and impaired coordination.
- **Cold and Flu Medications** Many combination products contain antihistamines or decongestants that can lead to sedation or increased heart rate, affecting driving ability.
- **Sleep Aids** Over-the-counter sleep medications, such as diphenhydramine and doxylamine, can cause prolonged drowsiness and impair reaction times.
- Pain Relievers Some pain medications, particularly those containing codeine or other opioids (even in lower doses), can cause sedation and impair cognitive function.
- **Stomach Medications** Some medications for gastrointestinal issues, such as those containing dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), can cause drowsiness.

Some medicines can support safe driving by improving a person's overall health. For instance, individuals managing diabetes should take their medications as prescribed to help keep blood sugar levels within a safe range for driving.

The list of medicines above is not all inclusive. It is essential for drivers to consult with their healthcare providers and pharmacist about the impact of any medications they are taking and how these may affect their ability to drive safely.



08

HELP FROM DRIVER ASSISTANCE TECHNOLOGIES

Driver assistance technologies can significantly enhance the safety and driving experience for individuals aged 65 and older when they know how to use them. Examples include:

Enhanced Safety Features

Technologies such as automatic emergency braking, lane departure warnings, and adaptive cruise control can help prevent accidents by providing alerts and taking corrective actions when necessary.

Improved Visibility

Features like rearview cameras and blind-spot monitoring assist older drivers in navigating their surroundings reducing the risk of collisions.

Ease of Use

Driver assistance systems are designed with simplicity in mind, making them accessible for older drivers. Their straightforward operation can help reduce stress and boost confidence behind the wheel.



Navigation Assistance

Advanced navigation systems provide real-time traffic updates and route guidance, helping older drivers avoid congested areas and reach their destinations more efficiently.

Reduced Physical Strain

Features like parking sensors and automated parking systems help ease the physical effort required to park, making driving less demanding and more comfortable.

Increased Independence

By enhancing safety and ease of use, these technologies help older adults maintain their independence, allowing them to continue driving and engaging in their daily activities.

Scan to learn more

Overall, driver assistance technologies can play a crucial role in supporting older drivers, promoting safer driving practices, and enhancing their overall mobility. To learn more about vehicle's technology, try talking with a car dealer or a friend or family member who is tech savvy, or attend a Smart DriverTEK™ - New Vehicle Technology Workshop. You can also visit MyCarDoesWhat.org to learn more.

09

CARFIT PROGRAM

Scan to learn more

CARFIT is a program developed by AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association. The program offers older adults the opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles "fit" them. This can improve safety by ensuring the car is properly adjusted. A proper fit in one's car can greatly increase not only the driver's safety but also the safety of others. To find a CARFIT program in your area, visit car-fit.org.



10

SAFE PRACTICES + RETIREMENT FROM DRIVING

When to Modify Your Driving

+ Familiarity with Locations

If drivers are aware of specific routes that are less congested and have fewer hazards, it is advisable to utilize these paths. Familiarity can enhance comfort level and reduce stress while driving.

+ Weather Conditions

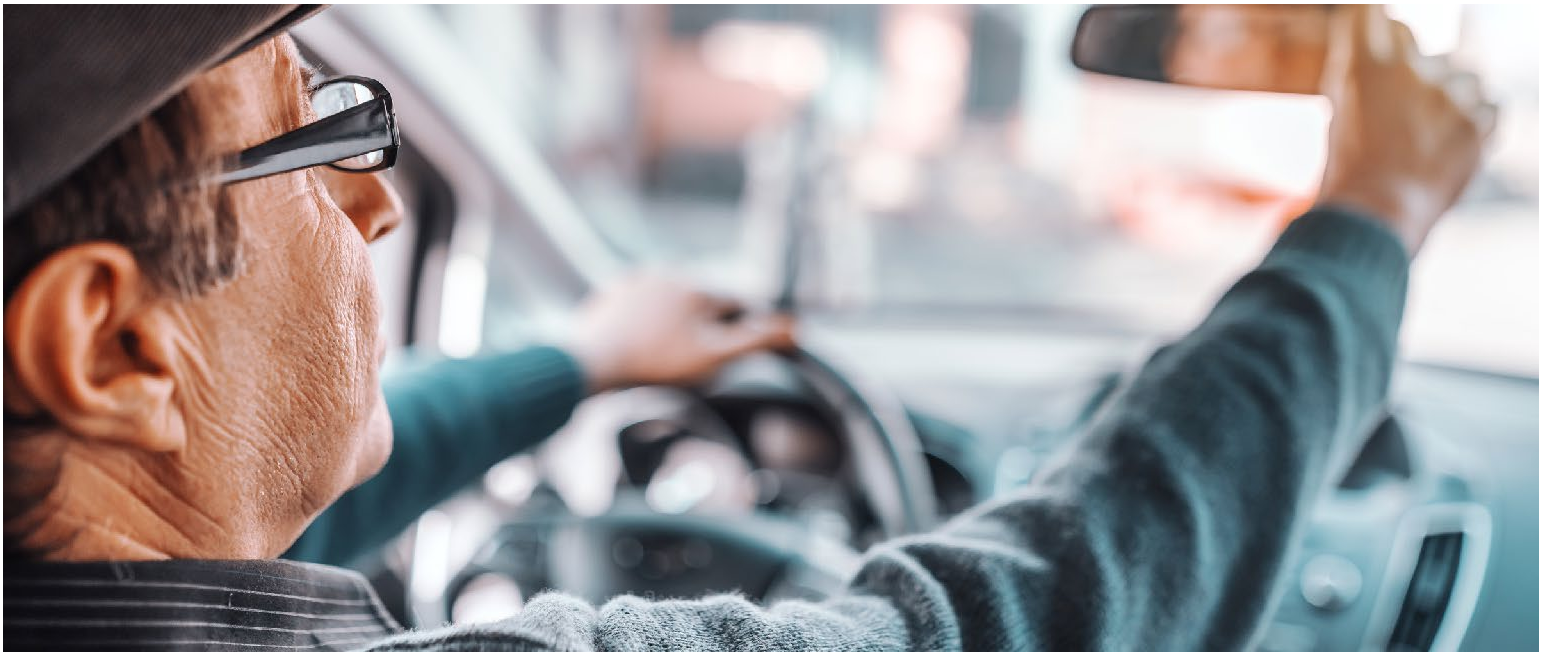
Adjust driving speed and behavior based on weather conditions. Rain, fog, or snow can significantly impact visibility and road traction. On such days, consider driving at lower speeds and maintaining greater distances from other vehicles.

+ Traffic Patterns

Be mindful of peak traffic times. Driving during off-peak hours can reduce the likelihood of encountering heavy traffic, making for a more relaxed driving experience.

+ Personal Health

If you are feeling unwell or fatigued, it is best to avoid driving. Your health should always take precedence over the need to travel.



When to Retire from Driving

Deciding to retire from driving is a significant decision that should be approached with careful consideration. Here are some indicators that it may be time.

Declining Health

Health issues that affect the ability to drive safely, such as vision impairment, cognitive decline, or physical limitations, may indicate it is time to reassess driving capabilities. Drivers should speak with a healthcare professional to discuss symptoms and any medications they may be taking.

Increased Incidents

A pattern of near-misses, accidents, or traffic violations can signal that driving skills may no longer meet the demands of the road.

Feedback from Others

Pay attention to concerns raised by family members or friends regarding driving. Their observations can provide valuable insights into a person's driving abilities.

Professional Evaluation

Older drivers should consult with a Driver Rehabilitation Specialist who can assess driving skills and provide guidance tailored to their needs.

Practice and Training

Working with a driving instructor or a professional to engage in additional driving practice can help build confidence and improve skills.

Self-Assessment

Drivers should regularly assess driving skills and comfort level. Older drivers can use the “Am I a good driver?” checklist in this document to see if there are concerns.

Comfort Level

If a driver is feeling anxious or fearful while driving, it may be a sign that they should consider alternative transportation options.

Emotional Preparedness

Giving up driving can be an emotional and challenging transition. Recognizing these feelings is important, and seeking support from family, friends, or professionals can help ease the adjustment.

Modifying driving habits to suit your environment and personal circumstances is crucial for maintaining safety on the road. Additionally, recognizing when it is time to retire from driving is equally important for your safety and the safety of others. Always prioritize your well-being and that of fellow road users when making these decisions.

Exploring Alternatives

Alternative transportation options such as public transit, ridesharing services, or community shuttles can help maintain mobility without driving. Planning ahead for future transportation needs can ensure a smooth transition. For helpful resources, see the Appendix for the CDC guide to MyMobility Plan.

11

DRIVER REHABILITATION PROGRAM

A driver rehabilitation program is designed to assess and enhance the driving skills of individuals who may have experienced changes in their abilities due to age, medical conditions, or other factors. These programs typically involve a comprehensive evaluation of a person's physical, cognitive, and visual skills, followed by personalized training to improve their driving capabilities.

Drivers should consider using the program for several reasons:

Safety

It helps ensure that they can drive safely and confidently, reducing the risk of accidents.

Independence

Improved driving skills can enhance their independence, allowing them to maintain mobility and access essential services.

Confidence

The program can help rebuild confidence in driving abilities, especially after an injury or health issue.

Driver Rehabilitation Specialist

Family members can assist their loved ones in accessing a Driver Rehabilitation Specialist by:

Researching

They can look for certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialists in their area through professional organizations or healthcare providers.

Encouragement

Family members can encourage their loved ones to participate in the program, emphasizing the benefits of improved driving skills.

Support

They can help with scheduling appointments, providing transportation to evaluations or training sessions, and being involved in discussions about the individual's driving needs and concerns.

To find a Driver Rehabilitation Specialist, you can search for providers at the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists website. The Towards Zero Deaths Website also has a listing of specialists and resources to assist you. Website links found under resources starting on page A.1.

APPENDIX

RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES





FOR MORE INFORMATION

AAA Senior Driving

Has driver planning agreement, CARFIT and smart features. It also offers tools to evaluate driving abilities and understand mind/body changes, improve driving skills, maintain mobility and independence to assist seniors as well as their family and friends.

exchange.aaa.com/safety/senior-driver-safety-mobility/

AARP

Has driver safety courses, free online seminar called “We Need to Talk” that will help you determine how to assess your loved ones’ driving skills and provide tools to help you have this important conversation, videos of driver tips on roadway patterns and staying sharp.

www.aarp.org/auto/

American Occupational Therapy Association

“Driving and Community Mobility” provides helpful resources including information on how occupational therapy can help older drivers.

www.aota.org/practice/clinical-topics/driving-community-mobility

Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists

Provides fact sheets and directory of driver rehabilitation specialists who are considered the gold standard for expertise in the field on evaluation and rehabilitation drivers.

www.ADED.net

BuckleUp MN: Promoting Seatbelt Safety Statewide

buckleupmn.org/

Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute

Provides services for new or experienced drivers with visual, cognitive or medical challenges or changes due to aging, disability or mental health issues.

www.allinahealth.org/Courage-Kenny-Rehabilitation-Institute/Programs-and-services/Driver-Assessment-and-Training-Services/

Minnesota Emergency Nurse Association

minnesotaena.com/resources/driver-safety/

The Hartford

"We Need to Talk" from The Hartford, discusses conversations about a transition from any driver. It is considered a go-to resource for professionals advising older drivers because it is based on research conducted at the MIT Age-Lab. They also provide information on vehicle Technology, Tips for meaningful conversations with older drivers, evaluation to assess driving skills, driving wellness and helpful publications.

www.thehartford.com/resources/mature-market-excellence/driving-safety

Minnesota Department of Public Safety Driver and Vehicle Services

Is responsible for issuing license plates, driver's licenses, disability plates and placards, and state ID cards; canceling, revoking and suspending driver's licenses; evaluating the ability of individuals to driver and collecting and disseminating crash information.

dps.mn.gov/

Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety

Is dedicated to keeping people safe on Minnesota roadways by improving individuals' behavior. The office also can provide statistics on older drivers in Minnesota or the nation.

Minnesota Gerontological Society

Is a group of social service professionals, housing experts, health care providers, research scientists, administrators, retirees, attorneys, and others who share a common interest in aging.

Minnesota Safety Council

Is dedicated to keeping Minnesotans safe from injury. "Accidents" don't just happen-they are predictable and preventable. The council offers information, classroom training, consultation, and many safety programs to help prevent injuries at work, at home at play and on our roadways.

msc.imiscloud.com/MNSC/MNSC/Home.aspx

Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths

www.Minnesotatzd.org/resources/olderdrivers

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Provides information on changes that can affect safe driving and on potential warning signs of impairment with options that include a video toolkit on medical conditions in older drivers, information on driving safely while aging gracefully, national statistics on older drivers, and research on older driver issues. Its “Drive Well” toolkit provides information for people working directly with older adults on understanding the issues, developing public information events, and evaluating effectiveness of programing.

www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/older-drivers

Senior LinkAge Line

(800)-333-2433 is a one-stop shop for Minnesota seniors, providing free assistance and information on health care, insurance, transportation, government services, prescription drugs, long term care, employment and living with disabilities.

mn.gov/senior-linkage-line/

MinnesotaHelp.info®

www.minnesotahelp.info/

HOW TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION

Retirement from Driving: For Family and Caregivers

Discussing driving retirement with someone can be a sensitive and challenging topic. As our loved ones age, their ability to drive safely may diminish, leading to concerns about their independence and safety. Here are some strategies to approach this important conversation with empathy and respect.

First, choose the right time and place.

Select a calm and private setting to have the conversation. Avoid discussing this topic during stressful moments or when the driver is preoccupied. A relaxed environment can help facilitate open and honest dialogue.

Second, express your concerns gently.

Start the conversation by expressing your love and concern for their well-being. Use "I" statements to communicate your feelings, such as, "I've noticed you seem a bit anxious when driving lately, and I'm worried about your safety." This approach helps to avoid sounding accusatory and encourages a more constructive discussion.

Listen actively.

Give the driver the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about driving. Listen actively and validate their emotions. They may feel a sense of loss or fear about losing their independence. Acknowledging these feelings can help them feel understood and respected.

Then, discuss observations and experiences

with your loved one. Share specific observations that have raised your concerns, such as difficulty with parking, slower reaction times, or near misses. Providing concrete examples can help the driver understand the basis of your concerns without making them feel attacked.

Next, explore alternatives together.

Discuss the possibility of reducing driving or exploring alternative transportation options. Offer to help them find local services, such as public transportation, rideshare apps, or community shuttles. Emphasizing that there are alternatives can alleviate fears about losing independence.

Involve a professional if necessary.

If the driver is resistant to the conversation, consider involving a trusted healthcare professional. A doctor or occupational therapist can provide an objective assessment of their driving abilities and may help reinforce the importance of safety.



RESOURCES + ACTIVITIES

Am I a Safe Driver?

Check the box if the statement applies to you.

- [ ] I get lost while driving.
- [ ] My friends or family members say they are worried about my driving.
- [ ] Other cars seem to appear from nowhere.
- [ ] I have trouble finding and reading signs in time to respond to them.
- [ ] Other drivers drive too fast.
- [ ] Other drivers often honk at me.
- [ ] Driving stresses me out.
- [ ] After driving, I feel tired.
- [ ] I feel sleepy when I drive.
- [ ] I have had more “near-misses” lately.
- [ ] Busy intersections bother me.
- [ ] Left-hand turns make me nervous.
- [ ] The glare from oncoming headlights bothers me.
- [ ] My medication makes me dizzy or drowsy.

- [ ] I have trouble turning the steering wheel.
- [ ] I have trouble pushing down the foot pedal.
- [ ] I have trouble looking over my shoulder when I back up.
- [ ] I have been stopped by the police for my driving.
- [ ] People no longer will accept rides from me.
- [ ] I have difficulty backing up.
- [ ] I have had accidents that were my fault in the past year.
- [ ] I am too cautious when driving.
- [ ] I sometimes forget to use my mirrors or signals.
- [ ] I sometimes forget to check for oncoming traffic.
- [ ] I have more trouble parking lately.

If you have checked any of the boxes, your safety may be at risk when you drive. Talk to your doctor about ways to improve your safety when you drive.





MyMobility Plan

What can you do to stay independent?

Many people make financial plans for retirement, but not everyone plans for other changes that may come with age. This includes changes in your mobility—your ability to get around.

It's not easy to talk about, but as we get older, physical changes can make it harder to get around and do thing we want or need to do—like driving, shopping, or doing household chores.

There may be a time when you still need to get around, but can no longer drive.

You might not have mobility problems now, but you could in the future. You may even know others who already do—perhaps a parent, relative, friend, or neighbor. While it may not be possible to prevent all of these changes there are actions you and your loved ones can take today, and as you age, to help keep you safe and independent tomorrow.

MySelf
A plan to stay independent

MyHome
A plan to stay safe at home

MyNeighborhood
A plan to stay mobile in my community

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Make a plan today.
Stay independent tomorrow.

MySelf ⋮ A plan to stay independent



Staying healthy and managing chronic conditions help maintain your mobility.

To start building your plan, complete the checklist below.

☐ Get a physical checkup each year.

Some health issues may increase your risk of falling (such as leg weakness and balance problems).

Last Exam Date: _____

Next Exam Date: _____

☐ Review all your medicines with a doctor or pharmacist.

Certain medicines can have side effects that can change your ability to drive, walk, or get around safely. To learn more, go to: https://go.us.gov/xPADs

☐ Get a medical eye exam each year.

Eye problems can increase your risk of falling or being in a car crash.

Last Exam Date: _____

Next Exam Date: _____

MyMobility Tip

Good eyesight is about more than 20/20 vision. For example, you need to see well in the dark to drive safely at night.

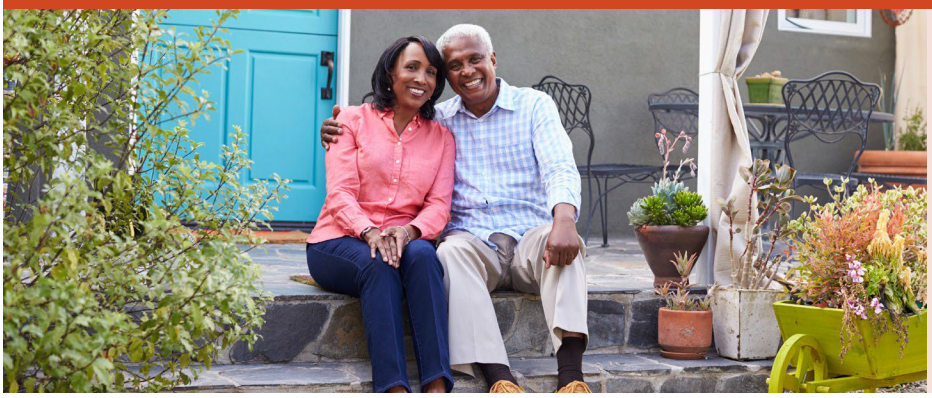
Get a medical eye exam each year and address any issues.

☐ Follow a regular activity program to increase your strength and balance.

Strength and balance activities, done at least 3 times a week, can reduce your risk of falling. Other activities, like walking, are good for you, but don't help prevent falls. Visit the National Institute on Aging's website for suggestions: www.go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercises

Strength Activity		Balance Activity	
Exercise	**Start Date**	**Exercise**	**Start Date**
Chair Stand	*Next Monday*	*Tai Chi*	*Next Monday*

MyHome ⋮ A plan to stay safe at home



To continue your plan, schedule a time to go through the following home safety checklist to help prevent falls.

Check the FLOORS in each room and reduce tripping hazards:

- ☐ Keep objects off the floor.
- ☐ Remove or tape down rugs.
- ☐ Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall and out of the way.

Check the KITCHEN:

- ☐ Put often-used items within easy reach (about waist level).
- ☐ For items not within easy reach, always use a step stool and never use a chair.

Check the BEDROOMS:

- ☐ Use bright light bulbs.
  - ☐ Place lamps close to the bed where they are within reach.
- ☐ Put in night-lights to be able to see a path in the dark. For areas that don't have electrical outlets, consider battery-operated lights.

Check inside and outside STAIRS and STEPS:

- ☐ Check for loose or uneven steps. Repair if needed.
- ☐ Make sure carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads.
- ☐ Check for loose or broken handrails. Repair if needed.
- ☐ Consider installing handrails on both sides of the stairs.
- ☐ Use bright overhead lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- ☐ Consider putting light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs.

Check the BATHROOMS:

- ☐ Put non-slip rubber mats or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- ☐ Consider installing grab bars for support getting in or out of the tub or shower, and up from the toilet.

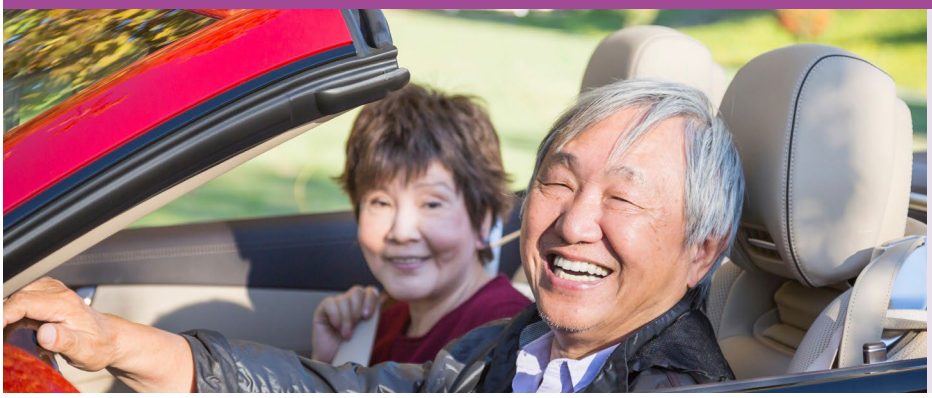
For more home modification information and resources:
https://go.usa.gov/xUEs3

MyMobility Tip

Falls are more likely when wearing inappropriate footwear, such as flip flops that don't cover the heel.

Wear safe shoes that fit well, have a firm heel to provide stability, and have a textured sole to prevent slipping.

MyNeighborhood ⋮ A plan to stay mobile in my community



Finish your plan by filling out the table below.

Think of all the places you go and how to get there.

Then, consider how you would get these same places if you couldn't use your current way.

☐ Find transportation options in your zip code:

Rides in Sight

1-855-607-4337

www.ridesinsight.org

Ride share services can help keep you connected to family and friends. Staying social helps maintain quality of life as you age.

Where do I go now? (Such as doctor, grocery store, or physical activity class)	**How do I get there now?** (Such as drive, get a ride, or use public transportation)	**How will I get there in the future?** (Such as bus, rideshare or ride with a friend)
Meet friends for lunch	*Drive myself*	*Get a ride from a friend*

☐ Find transportation options in your zip code:

Some insurers give a discount on your car insurance for taking a course:

- AARP: (888) 687-2277 or www.aarp.org
- AAA: (800) 222-4357 or www.aaa.com

MyMobility Tip

Practice safe behaviors, such as always wearing a seatbelt, as a driver or a passenger.

For more information visit:
www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/older-adult_drivers/mymobility

STRENGTHENING YOUR BRAIN

Driving requires cognitive skills – the ability to sort information and respond to it. Brain exercises can help maintain brain health. See your doctor to be sure your sight and hearing are good.

3			8		1			2
2		1		3		6		4
			2		4			
8		9				1		6
	6						5	
7		2				4		9
			5		9			
9		4		8		7		5
6			1		7			3

S	J	C	A	M	P	M	C
W	G	L	A	M	C	H	M
I	J	M	M	P	Y	Y	Z
M	V	K	B	E	A	C	H
S	U	M	M	E	R	M	S
M	H	O	T	E	B	H	U
K	O	I	G	U	F	U	N
W	A	T	E	R	O	Q	E

BEACH

CAMP

FUN

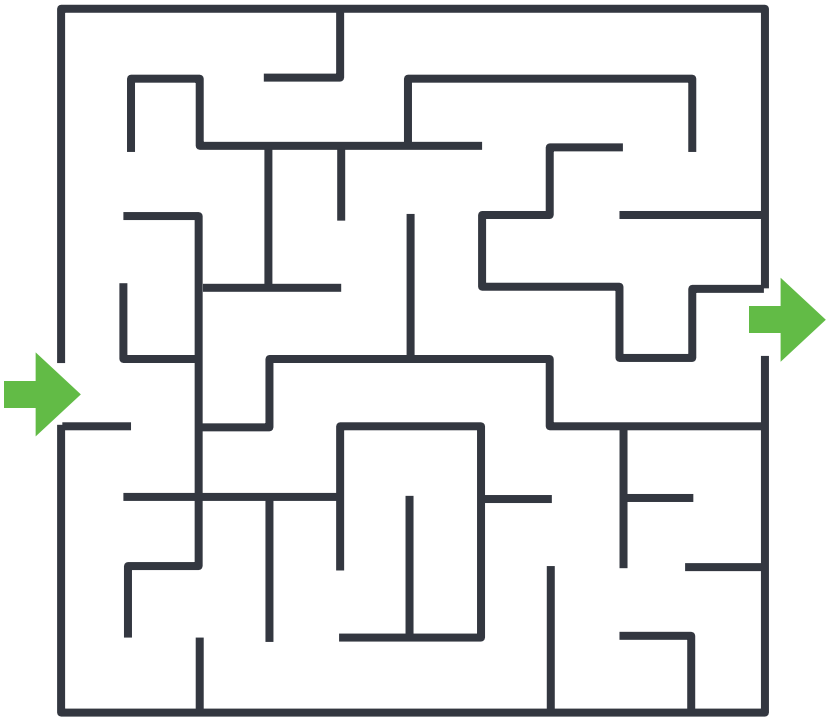
HOT

SUMMER

SUN

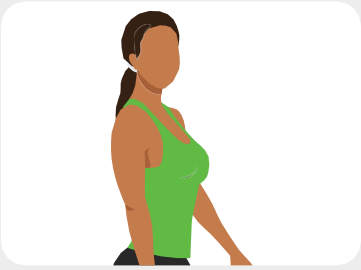
SWIM

WATER

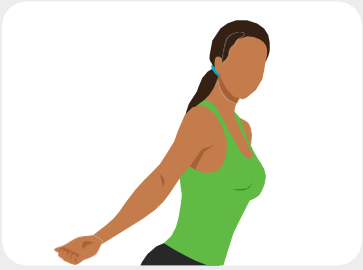


STRENGTHENING YOUR DRIVING MUSCLES

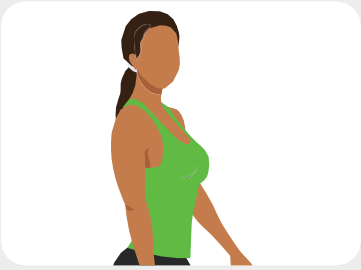
Shoulder and Chest Stretch



Sit relaxed in a chair with feet on floor. Hold arms straight down and slightly to side. Palms down, fingers curled in a relaxed position.



Lean forward slightly, while bringing arms back - palms should be pointing up. Take a deep breath for count of 4 - expanding your chest and stretching your back

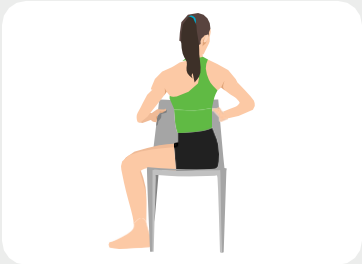


Relax and sit upright. Repeat leaning forward and stretching up to 4 times.

Torso Twist and Stretch



Sit with your bottom squarely in your chair with feet on the floor. Let one arm hang at your side, fingers curled in a relaxed position. The other arm should rest on your thigh, slightly bent.

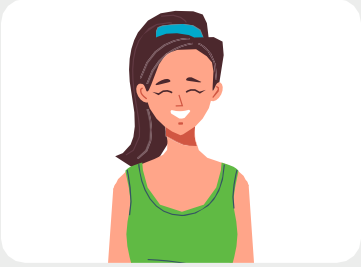


Slightly lift the bent arm and use it to help twist your trunk toward the arm that is straight. Do not move your bottom, only twist your trunk. Hold for 3-5 seconds.



Return to starting position, repeat 1-3 times. As you do this more, twist further. Repeat in the other direction. It is ok to grab the back of your chair to help twist.

Neck Flexing



Sit relaxed in chair with feet on floor. Hold arms slightly to the side hands down, fingers curled in a relaxed position, or resting on thighs. Eyes straight ahead.



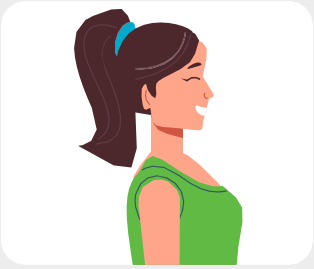
Gently turn your head to one side- do not force this if it causes pain. Hold for 3-4 seconds.

If you get dizzy or lightheaded doing this- STOP! And do not repeat.

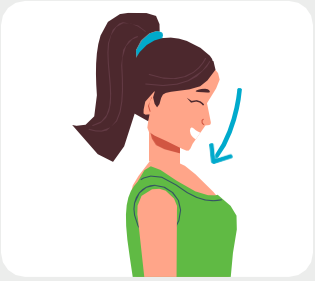


Turn head back to face forward. Repeat 3-4 times. Then turn head the other direction, hold 3-4 seconds and return to face forward.

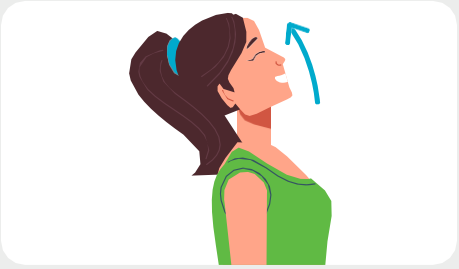
More Neck Flexing



Sit squarely on the chair, arms on thighs, head positioned so eyes are looking forward.

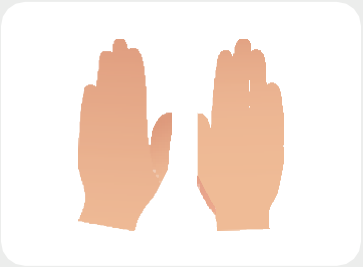


Slowly bring head towards chest, hold for count of 3-5, then return head to original position.

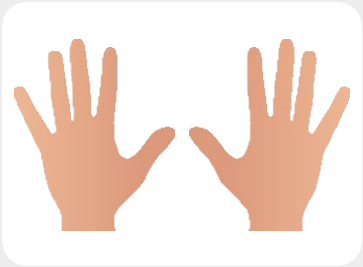


Slowly tilt head backward, so eyes look toward ceiling. Stop if you get dizzy or feel weakness, you may want to hang onto something to maintain balance. Hold for count of 3-5. Return to original position and start at 1 again, tilting head forward.

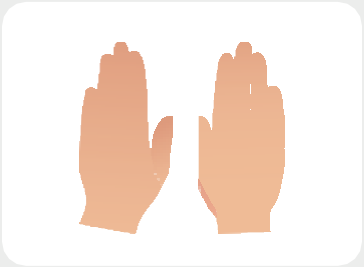
Finger Flexing



Sit relaxed in chair with feet on floor. Hold arms straight out in front or slightly to the side with wrists straight, palms down, fingers curled in a relaxed position.

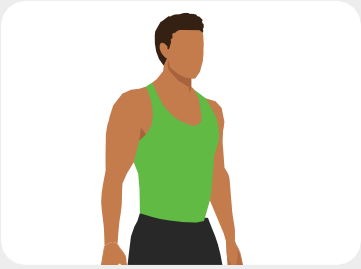


Spread your fingers and thumb apart, hold for 3-5 seconds.

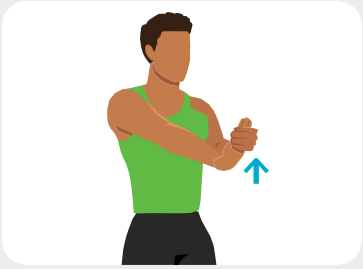


Relax fingers to flexed position. Repeat 4-8 times.

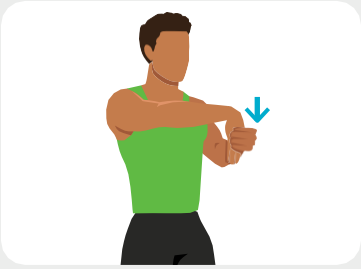
Wrist Flexing



Sit relaxed in chair with feet on floor. Hold arms straight out in front, or slightly to the side with wrists straight and relaxed, palms down.



Flex wrists upward to 90 degrees. Hold for 2-4 seconds. Relax to straight then flex downward 90 degrees and hold for 2-4 seconds.



Relax wrists to straight position. Repeat 4-8 times.

Heel and Shin Stretch



Sit relaxed in chair with feet on floor. Hold arms slightly to the side with hands down, fingers curled in a relaxed position.



Alternately point and straighten your foot holding the pose for 3-4 seconds. Repeat 8-10 times. Switch feet, or alternate one foot pointed up, when the other is pointed down.



Relax and sit with both feet flat on the ground.

Leg Lift



Sit squarely on a chair with your arms resting on your thighs, back straight, and feet flat on the ground.

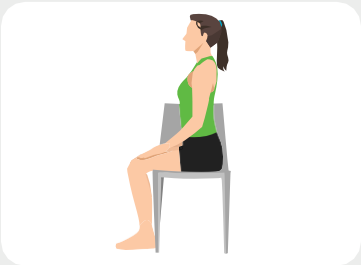


Keeping your knee bent, raise your leg 4-6 inches, hold for 3-5 seconds. Keep your back straight.

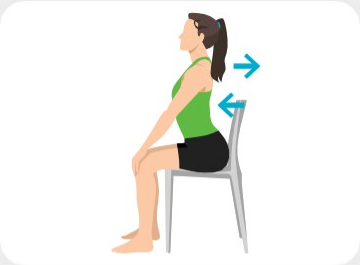


Lower your leg and repeat 4-8 times. Do the same with your other leg.

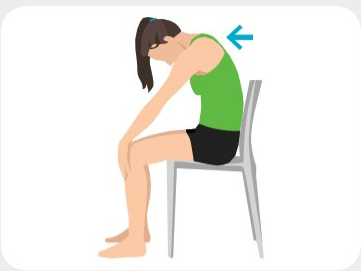
Lower Back and Shoulder Stretch



Sit with your feet on the floor, back straight and arms resting on your thighs.



Push your shoulders back and bring your chest out while you arch your back. Hold for 5 seconds.

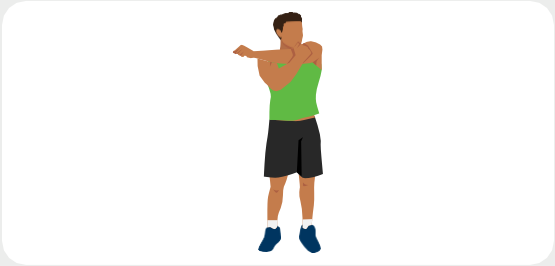


Relax to a straight back with your shoulders in a normal position. Repeat 4-5 times. Start slowly, increase repetitions over time.

Shoulder and Back Stretch



Stand straight with feet slightly apart and arms at your side.

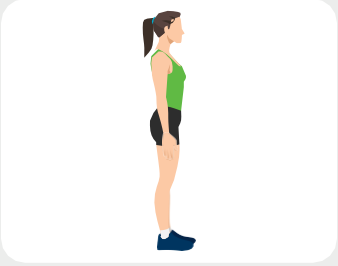


Reach across your chest and under the opposite arm, grasp the opposite elbow. Using your grasping hand, help pull your shoulder toward the opposite shoulder until you feel a light stretch in the shoulder and back. The hand of the stretched arm should move upward slightly. Hold for 5-10 seconds.



Relax, repeat each shoulder 1-2 times. Relax with both arms at your side. Change arms and repeat.

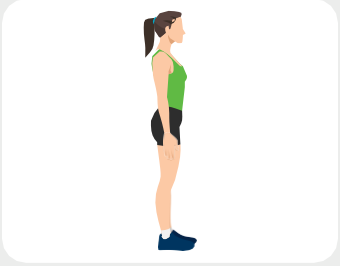
Leg Raising, Kicking, Coordinating



Stand straight with feet slightly apart and arms at your side.

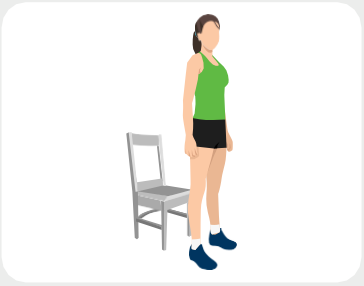


Bring one leg up and out straight ahead (or slightly to the side). As you get better, increase the height of your leg raise. Raise arms to maintain balance. You can do this exercise quickly, like kicking a ball.

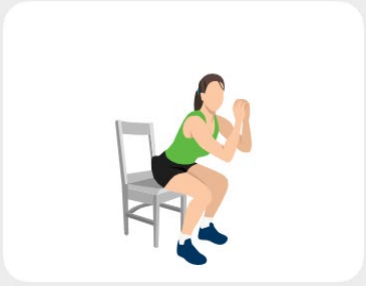


Bring your foot back to the floor and arms down to your sides. Repeat up to 8 times with one side and then repeat with the other leg. You can repeat 2-3 sets

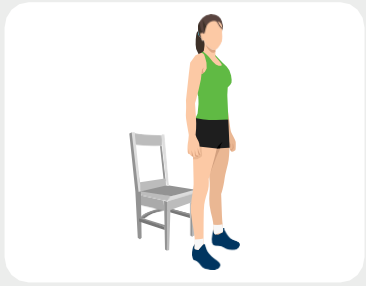
Thigh Strengthener



Stand straight with feet slightly apart and arms at your side.



Slowly squat down, as if you are going to sit in a chair. Lift arms to chest level to maintain balance. Keep back straight and inhale when squatting, hold 2-3 second.



Exhale and stand. Repeat 8-10 times.

This is sometimes easier if you hold the back of a chair or sturdy object when doing this to maintain balance. Another option is to start sitting down, barely land, and then stand up again. Do not use chair arms, this defeats purpose exercise.

These exercises designed specifically for driving muscles can be found on the Hartford Foundation web site:

https://assets.thehartford.com/image/upload/exercise_for_mature_drivers.pdf

7 TO-DO'S BEFORE YOU DRIVE

The following seven steps can help decrease the risk of crashes, injuries, and death.

1 Plan Your Trip

Do you know where you are going? Is there road construction to avoid or traffic patterns that can be overwhelming? Is there a different route that might be safer? Are the roads going to be clear and dry? Or, are there going to be unsafe driving conditions due to poor visibility (fog, rain, sleet, snow, etc.)? Will dusk fall while you are driving? Will you be driving into a rising or setting sun? All these affect our vision and visibility, which changes with aging. Can you adjust your trip so you are driving in daylight? If the trip is long, can you take a stretch break? Will someone know if you don't arrive and send someone to look for you? If something happens, do you have a way to call for help? Planning your trip around these questions can help you have a safer trip.

2 Are You in the Right Frame of Mind to be Driving?

Are you sleepy, angry, worried, or not feeling well? These can pull your attention away from driving or affect your ability to control the vehicle. If you been drinking alcohol or using cannabis, your ability to control your vehicle may be affected. Make sure you are well rested and have a clear mind so your attention can be completely on driving.

3 Are Your Muscles Tuned Up?

Can you easily turn your head from side to side, looking over your shoulder to check for vehicles in your blind spot? Are your legs able to move easily from the brake to the gas or from the gas to the brake? Do your arms get tired holding the steering wheel? Muscular endurance is key to safe driving. Doing exercises to strengthen your driving muscles, increase your flexibly, and improve your endurance will help you be a safer driver.

4 Avoid Distractions

Driving requires your full attention to process information about the vehicle, roadway, and other vehicles on the road. Listening to others talk, using a mobile phone, eating, or doing other tasks while driving diverts attention away from one of the most complex and risky tasks you do – driving! With aging our ability to sort sensory input decreases. Decrease distractions as much as possible when driving. You may even need to ask passengers to "hold it down" so you can concentrate.

5 Make Sure You "Fit" in Your Vehicle

Does your seatbelt sit across your collarbone and your hip bones? Are you at least ten inches from the steering wheel and airbag? Can you reach the gas and brake pedals easily? Can you see three inches over the steering wheel? Does your head rest correctly in the headrest of the seat? Are your mirrors correctly adjusted? These and other safety points are measured at CarFit events. Check one out to increase your safety and decrease risk of injury in a crash. To find a CARFIT program in your area, visit car-fit.org.

6 Properly Wear Your Seatbelt

Wearing a seat belt properly (over the shoulder/collarbone, and snugly across the pelvis) will protect you in a crash. Wearing a seatbelt under the arm puts you at risk of flying forward, striking your head and chest on the steering wheel, or dashboard. An airbag alone does not protect. Concerns about pacemakers breaking during a crash have been unfounded. If pressure from the belt over the pacemaker is uncomfortable, padding may be placed over the area.



7 Be Aware of Medication Effects

Medications include prescription, over the counter, herbal, and cannabis. Some of these are clearly labeled as risky to driving as they may cause drowsiness. Others are not. It is important to know if any of your medications can cause weakness, lightheadedness, blurred vision, or difficulty controlling your extremities and affect your driving. Know how your medications affect you before trying to drive and don't be afraid to ask your medical provider or pharmacist if you have questions.

DRIVER ORIENTATION SCREEN FOR COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

Questions do not need to be asked in order and may be worked into the conversation.

All nine questions should be asked to create the score. Each incorrect answer is one point.

The three additional questions at the bottom of the card may provide helpful information related to cognition.

5+ INCORRECT: Unsafe to drive today; refer to department procedures for alternative transportation and vehicle removal. Submit Request for Evaluation of Driver form.

3-4 INCORRECT: Potentially unsafe to drive today; consider totality of circumstances/request examination of driver.

0-2 INCORRECT: Based on totality of circumstances, does not need referral for examination based on cognition.

Driver Orientation Screen for Cognitive Impairment

Rule out intoxication and urgent medical conditions

- [ ] What is your date of birth?
- [ ] What is you full home address?
- [ ] What state are we in now?
- [ ] What city/town are we in now?
- [ ] Without looking at your watch, can you estimate what time it is now? (Answer provided must be plus or minus one hour of correct time)
- [ ] What day of the week is it?

What is today's date?

- [ ] Month
- [ ] Day
- [ ] Year

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO HELP DETERMINE ORIENTATION

- [ ] Where are you coming from and where are you going?
- [ ] Will you spell your name?
- [ ] Do you have an emergency contact? What is their name and phone number?

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