Fit to Drive
Traffic Safety for Older Drivers
The aging process may increase your risk of being in a traffic crash, and it affects the severity of injuries you experience. Drivers 65 years and older are more likely to experience a fatal or disabling injury than other drivers.

- What puts older drivers at risk?

- What can you do to increase your safety and the safety of others on the road?

This pamphlet uses Missouri traffic crash statistics to increase your knowledge of the risk factors for motor vehicle crashes and provide practical driving suggestions to help improve your safety. It also provides an overview of medical conditions that could impair driving and warrant an evaluation by your physician.
Are you fit to drive?

Driving Suggestions

Your choices can create a difference in your driving safety. Below are suggestions to help improve your safety and others on the road.

**Behavioral**

Behavioral decisions you make affect your safety as a driver. For example, older drivers who fail to wear a seatbelt are 15 times more likely to experience a fatal injury in a crash than older drivers who are wearing a seatbelt. In addition, crashes caused by inattention tend to be more serious for older drivers.

- Adjust mirrors and seat height to fit your needs.
- Routinely have your vehicle serviced and checked for defects.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Use a seatbelt.
- Do not drive drowsy or during a time when you are normally asleep.
- Avoid distracting activities while driving such as eating or using a cell phone.
**Environmental**

Older drivers tend to avoid driving during inclement weather. However, older drivers involved in crashes during inclement weather are more likely to experience a fatal or disabling injury.

- Don’t drive too fast for conditions.
- Drive cautiously through work zones.
- Drive during daylight or on well-lit roads.

**Intersections**

Older drivers are five times more likely to experience a fatal injury during a crash at an intersection than other drivers. Older drivers involved in a crash at a stop sign are nine times more likely to experience a fatal injury than other drivers.

- Yield where appropriate.
- Read signs carefully to prevent driving the wrong way down a one-way street or highway.
- Come to a complete stop at stop signs.
Are you fit to drive?

Vehicle Control

Older drivers involved in a traffic crash where one car is parking are 2.5 times more common for older drivers. In addition, older drivers involved in a crash where one car is leaving a driveway are two times more likely to experience a fatal or disabling injury than other drivers.

- Do not follow other vehicles too closely.
- Be careful while backing up.
- Check mirrors and blind spots prior to changing lanes.
- Be cautious crossing roadways.
- Watch out for cars pulling in and out of driveways.
- Drive carefully around parked vehicles.
**Turning**

Crashes caused by improper turning are 1.5 times more common for older drivers. Crashes caused by making an improper right turn on red are two times more common for older drivers.

- Use caution while making right turns on red lights.
- Use proper turning signals.
- Yield properly while making left turns or utilize intersections that have signals with a left-turn arrow.
Are you fit to drive?

**Medical Information**

Please review these checklists of common medical issues that affect driving and discuss any of the checked items with your physician.

**Vision**

Common diseases that can affect the eye later in life include diabetes, glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration.

- Do you have problems with reading?
- Do you have trouble with distances?
- Do you miss things off to the side?
- Is it difficult for you to judge depth?
- Do you have problems seeing at night?
- Do you see halos around lights?
- Do you have trouble with bright lights?
- Is your vision ‘blurry’?
- Do you have double vision?
- Is the middle of your vision unclear?
- Do straight lines at times seem wavy?
- Do you ever have ‘spots’ or ‘floaters’?

**Memory and Thinking**

Common diseases or symptoms that can affect the brain later in life include dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, sleep apnea, diabetes, seizures and stroke.

- Do you have short term memory loss?
- Do you get lost while driving?
- Do you have trouble solving problems?
- Are you easily distracted?
- Do you need assistance at home?
- Do you experience weakness on one side?
- Do you have dizziness or blackouts?
- Do you nap excessively during the day?
- Do you have stamina problems or fatigue?
Are you fit to drive?

Strength and Flexibility

Common diseases or conditions that can affect the muscles and joints later in life include osteoarthritis, Parkinson’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis, amputation, and stroke.

- Are your arms or legs weak?
- Do you use a cane or walker?
- Do you have balance difficulties?
- Do you have tremors or shakiness?
- Do you have numbness in your arms/legs?
- Do you walk slowly or shuffle?
- Have you had any falls?
- Do you have limited neck range?
- Do you have problems with coordination?
Medications

Mental health issues and medications have the potential to impair driving. Discuss the effects of your medication on driving with your pharmacist. Common conditions that can affect drivers later in life include anxiety, insomnia, depression, alcoholism, suspicions, and hallucinations.

Do you take any medications that could impair your ability to drive such as:

- Anti-depressants
- Antihistamines
- Muscle relaxants
- Anxiety medications
- Pain medications
- Sleeping pills
- Narcotics
- Nausea medications

An illness or a new symptom by itself does not indicate that you should stop driving or are at risk of causing a crash or an injury. However, it is important to ask your doctor and family members if any of your symptoms or diagnoses could impair the operation of a motor vehicle.
ARRIVE ALIVE

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