

For information on AAA's Safe Driving for Mature Operators Driver Improvement Program, contact your local AAA club. Other resources include:

AAA's Straight Talk for Mature Drivers brochure series:

- ▼ Meeting the Challenge
- ▼ Buying a Vehicle
- ▼ Good Vision ... Vital to Good Driving
- ▼ Maintaining Your Vehicle
- ▼ Rx for Safe Driving

CarFit: Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit

This brochure features tips for adjusting your vehicle to meet your changing physical needs, ease the stress of driving and maximize safety.

AAA Roadwise Review

An interactive CD-ROM and online program that helps you identify changes in your ability to drive that could put you at risk.



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STRAIGHT TALK for Mature Drivers

Meeting the Challenge



Minimizing the Effects of Aging

Rush hour ... rude drivers ... road construction. These “three R’s” make driving stressful for everyone, especially those of us who have been driving since vehicles had fins. By 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 or older — and most will still be driving.

As you age, sight, hearing, judgment of speed and distance and reflexes diminish. These abilities change gradually, so you may not notice the impact on your driving until you are in a crash.

The good news is that you may be able to compensate for the effects of aging. Mature drivers can minimize their risks on the road through physical conditioning, travel planning, defensive driving and choosing a vehicle that meets their needs.



Feeling Better Behind the Wheel

Overall well-being contributes to your performance as a driver. Mature drivers are more likely to have impaired hearing, reduced vision and slower reflexes. Other health factors that affect driving include ankle rigidity, wrist pain or weakness and decreased range of motion.

Good eyesight is critical to safe driving, because nearly 90 percent of the information drivers need is visual. Vision problems common to mature drivers include cataracts, glaucoma and night blindness.

Talk with your doctor about any medical conditions that may interfere with your driving and ask for suggestions to help minimize risk if you continue to drive. For example, exercise is a proven fatigue-fighter that also combats loss of mobility. A program as mild as regular walks can strengthen your heart, lungs and muscles and increase your flexibility and range of motion.

Be sure you understand how medications and drug and/or alcohol interactions can affect you. Even over-the-counter drugs can make you drowsy, slow reaction time, diminish concentration, blur your vision and impair your mobility. Ask your doctor or pharmacist how taking specific medications or combinations of medicines could affect your driving.

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Risks for Mature Drivers

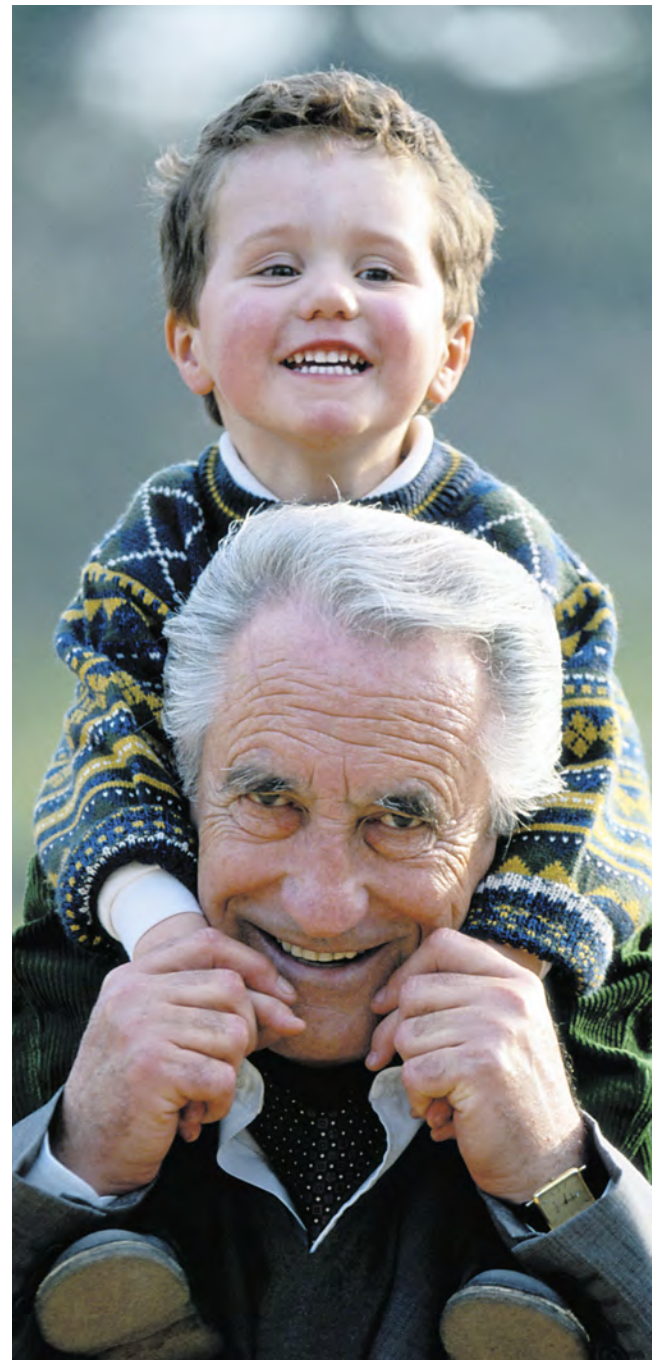
Some difficult tasks for senior drivers may include:

- ▼ Yielding right of way.
- ▼ Making left turns.
- ▼ Driving in heavy traffic.
- ▼ Backing up a vehicle.
- ▼ Maintaining proper speed.
- ▼ Responding to new traffic signs, signals, road markings or different traffic patterns and roadway designs.

Fine-Tune Your Driving Habits

Five pointers that will help protect all drivers:

- ▼ Move into an intersection only when you have checked the area for pedestrians, cyclists, hazards and any motor vehicles — don't allow other drivers to pressure you into sudden moves.
- ▼ Avoid all distractions while driving and enlist passengers to help with distracting tasks.
- ▼ Ensure your windshield and all windows and mirrors are clean and visibility is clear.
- ▼ Don't drive when you are tired, depressed or in the grips of a strong emotion.
- ▼ Never drink and drive. As your metabolism changes with age, even one drink can impair your ability to drive.



Exercise, defensive driving and careful choice of automobiles can help seniors compensate for the effects of aging on driving skills.

Planning Makes Driving Safer

Experience counts. What you may lack in quick reflexes, you may be able to compensate for in sound judgment. Maturity and foresight can help you minimize risk by making simple adjustments to your driving habits.



Tips for Staying Safer on the Road

- ▼ Time your trip for daylight driving, avoiding rush-hour traffic, storms and adverse conditions.
- ▼ Choose routes with well-marked, well-lit streets and easy-to-reach parking places.
- ▼ Avoid making difficult left turns such as at intersections with no traffic signal.
- ▼ Note landmarks and exits that will help you navigate.
- ▼ Turn on your headlights and fasten your seat belt — even for quick trips.
- ▼ Sit up straight and adjust your seat so the top of your steering wheel is shoulder-high. Adjust seats and mirrors for the best visibility.
- ▼ Drive at the posted speed limit. If you must drive slower than other vehicles on the road, stay in the right lane.
- ▼ Drive defensively and yield the right of way.
- ▼ In good weather, leave at least three seconds of space between you and the car ahead of you. In bad weather, double your following distance.
- ▼ Stay in the appropriate lane. Do not weave from lane to lane, straddle two lanes or change lanes near intersections.
- ▼ Use turn signals to help other drivers plan for your actions. Remember to cancel the signal if it doesn't automatically shut off.
- ▼ Take a break after every 90 minutes of driving. Get out of the vehicle and stretch to help relieve stiffness and fatigue.

Safer Vehicles for Safer Drivers

Mature drivers should choose a vehicle with options that help offset loss of strength or visibility. They include:

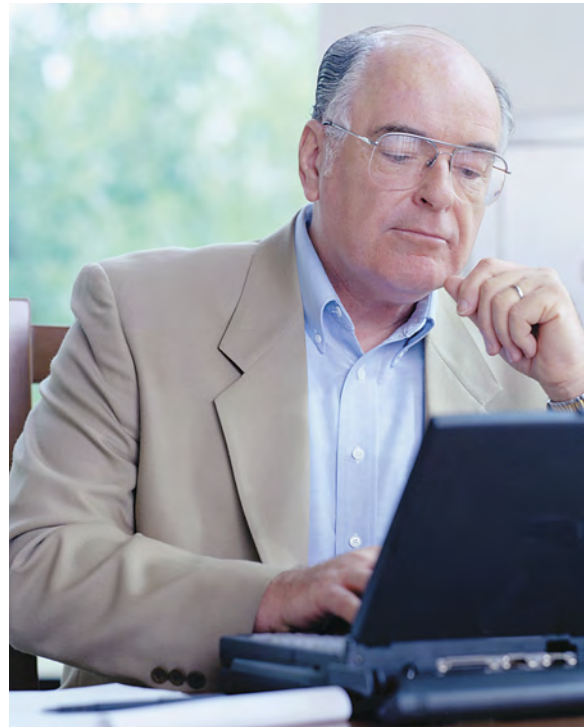
- ▼ Power steering.
- ▼ Power antilock brakes.
- ▼ Automatic transmission.
- ▼ Adjustable seats and steering wheel.
- ▼ Dual-stage front and side air bags.
- ▼ Daytime running lights.
- ▼ Untinted windshield.
- ▼ Adaptive equipment such as hand controls.

How your vehicle “fits” also is critical to your safety. AAA offers a program called **CarFit: Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit**, which features tips for adjusting your vehicle to meet your changing physical needs, ease the stress of driving and maximize safety.

Whatever you drive, keep your vehicle in good operating condition by checking windshield wipers and making sure the headlights, tail-lights, windshield and rear window are clean.

Cell Phones and Driving

Distracted driving — including the use of cell phones, text messaging and other activities — contributes to thousands of automobile crashes each year. However, carrying a cell phone with you while traveling can provide an extra measure of security in the event of a breakdown or other roadside emergency. Pre-program the cell phone with 9-1-1 and AAA’s toll-free roadside assistance number, (800) AAA-HELP.



Refine Your Skills

A refresher course is a good investment. Most communities offer courses to update drivers on defensive tactics and may include hands-on experience. State motor vehicle departments provide lists of approved courses.

In at least 30 states, you become eligible for insurance discounts or reduced infraction points after completing certified driving courses, such as AAA’s Safe Driving for Mature Operators Driver Improvement Program.

To learn about AAA’s Safe Driving for Mature Operators courses, or for more information about a variety of mature driver and other issues, contact your local AAA club or access www.AAA.com/PublicAffairs. Information also is available from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, www.SeniorDrivers.org.

Is It Time to Stop Driving?

No one wants to give up the freedom and convenience of driving. Mature Americans prefer private vehicles over all other forms of transportation. Drivers age 65 and older take more than 80 percent of trips in their own vehicles.

If you are unsure of your performance, discuss the issue with a trusted friend or family member. Your physician may refer you to a driver rehabilitation specialist or other health professional who can assess your ability to drive. AAA also offers **Roadwise Review**, an interactive computer program that helps you measure abilities critical to safe driving and suggests ways to help keep you driving safely longer.

The decision to stop driving is a difficult one, but most of us want to make a responsible choice to protect ourselves and others. In the past few months, have you:

- ▼ Suffered a stroke, heart attack or diminished eyesight?
- ▼ Experienced difficulty in negotiating sharp turns and intersections?
- ▼ Hesitated over right-of-way decisions or situations you once took for granted?
- ▼ Been surprised by the sudden presence of other vehicles or pedestrians?
- ▼ Received negative feedback from others?
- ▼ Become lost on familiar routes?
- ▼ Felt nervous or exhausted after driving?
- ▼ Been cited for traffic violations or found at fault in crashes?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, it may be time to consider moving from the driver's seat to the passenger seat.



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