

Should I Stop Driving?

Do other drivers often honk at you? Have you had some accidents or traffic tickets? Are you getting lost even on well-known roads? Have family members or friends said they were worried about your driving? Do you drive less because you are not as confident as you once were? If you answered yes to any of these, you probably should think seriously about whether or not you are still a safe driver. If you have questions about your driving ability, talk to your doctor.

What Happens When Someone Gives Up Driving?

If you choose to give up driving, Driver and Motor Vehicle Services (DMV) will exchange your current license for an identification card.

Family doctors are required to report an unsafe driver to DMV for re-testing when a driver's medical impairment is severe and uncontrollable. DMV will usually suspend driving privileges until the driver passes DMV vision, knowledge and drive tests.

A health care professional, family member or neighbor may voluntarily report an unsafe driver to DMV. The driver may be required to obtain medical information from his physician or to take DMV tests. Depending on the results, a restricted license may be issued, or the license may be suspended. The driver may be able to return at a later date to demonstrate that he can drive safely.

How Will I Get Around?

Family members and friends can help. Most communities offer taxi services and reduced bus fares for older people, and some offer special transportation services on request. Senior centers may offer shuttle services. For information on transportation in your area, contact the Area Agencies on Aging at (800) 282-8096.

For more information

Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Driver Safety Unit

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How's My Driving?

Staying Safe Behind the Wheel



Shifting Gears in Later Years
Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services

Staying Safe Behind the Wheel

Older drivers are some of the safest drivers because they rarely speed or drive after drinking. Yet, compared to other younger and middle-aged adults, drivers over 70 are more likely to be involved in a crash. Knowing how age and certain medical conditions may affect driving can help you stay safe behind the wheel as long as possible.

How Does Age Affect Driving?

Physical Changes

As people age, joints may stiffen and muscles weaken. Turning your head to look back or steering and braking the car may become difficult. Vision problems include cataracts, macular degeneration and glaucoma.

Mental Changes

Reflexes may be slower, and it may be more difficult to focus your attention. You may have a hard time doing two things at once — something you have to do to drive safely.

Health Problems

Dementia causes serious memory, personality and behavioral problems that can impair driving. Other illnesses common among older people such as arthritis, Parkinson's disease, depression, or stroke, can affect driving. Diabetes may cause nerve damage in your hands, legs, or eyes or may put you at risk of losing consciousness.

Medications

Older adults often have one or more long-term illnesses and may be taking several different drugs. A combination of medicines can increase the effects of each drug on the body. Drugs that might interfere with driving include sleep aids, medicine to treat depression, antihistamines, strong pain-killers, and diabetes medications. If you are taking one or more of them, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Can I Be a Better Driver?

Older drivers are most at risk while yielding right of way, turning — especially left turns — lane changing, passing, and using freeway ramps. Pay extra attention at those times. If there is not a left-turn arrow, look for alternate routes that do provide such lights.

Avoid difficult situations such as driving at night, highways, rush hour, and bad weather. Limit your trips to lower the chances of a crash. Stick to streets you know. Leave a big space between your car and the one in front. Don't drive when you are tired.

Take a driving refresher class. Some car insurance companies reduce your payment if you pass such a class. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) sponsors the *55 ALIVE/Driver Safety Program*. Call (888) 227-7669 for details about courses in your area. The American Automobile Association (AAA) has a similar class, *Safe Driving for Mature Operators*. Contact your local AAA's office for class information.

