

How Aging Affects Driving

Driving is a complex, fast-paced activity. A typical driver makes 20 decisions per mile, with less than half a second to act to avoid a collision.

Age can affect a driver's ability to sense, decide and act. Know the early signs of driving difficulty so you can take action to drive longer and more safely.

What To Look For

It may not be obvious to an older adult or concerned friend or family member that a driver's physical capacity has changed. Some of the signs that an older driver needs assistance are that he or she:

- Neglects to buckle up
- Has difficulty working the pedals
- Has difficulty merging on freeways, or turning onto busy streets
- Has trouble seeing other vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians, especially at night
- Ignores or "misses" stop signs and other traffic signals
- Reacts slowly to sirens and flashing lights of emergency vehicles
- Weaves, straddles lanes, drifts into other lanes or changes lanes without signaling
- Gets lost or disoriented easily, even in familiar places

In addition, two or more traffic tickets, warnings, collisions or "near-misses" in the past two years may signal a problem.

Virginia GrandDriver®



Visit
www.granddriver.net
 or call
1-800-552-3402



Virginia department
 for the Aging



Virginia GrandDriver®



What You Should Know About Aging and Driving



Drive Safer. Stay Mobile. Learn How.

What is Virginia GrandDriver®?

An educational resource designed to provide Virginians with information about staying safe and mobile as they age. GrandDriver:

- Gives Virginians and their families suggestions to improve driving skills;
- Provides resources that will help older drivers compensate for age-related changes so they can safely stay on the road as long as possible;
- Encourages everyone to plan ahead for safe mobility before his or her later years; and
- Offers suggestions for alternative forms of transportation to help older Virginians maintain their mobility and independence.

More Older Drivers in Virginia

- In **2004**, there were an estimated 7,459,827 Virginians. Of these, **1,179,159** were age **60 or older**, making up approximately **15.8%** of the population, or **1 out of every 6 people**.¹
- In **2030**, there will be approximately 9,825,019 Virginians. Of these, an estimated **2,351,277** will be age **60 or older**, making up almost **24%** of the population, or almost **1 out of every 4 people**.²
- As the number of older drivers increases, adopting new mind set and behaviors will be necessary to prevent corresponding increases in traffic accidents and fatalities.

1 - Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 1: Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex and Age for Virginia: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004", (SC-EST2004-02-51). Release Date: March 2005. Web site: <http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/>.

2 - Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, State Interim Population Projections by Age and Sex: 2004 - 2030. Release Date: April 2005. Web site: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/projectionsagesex.html>.

In Virginia, 65 is a speed limit... not an age limit.

Know The Fundamentals

Basic rules for safe driving that apply to any age group:

- Always wear corrective lenses as required.
- Be rested. Don't drive when you are physically exhausted or sleep deprived.
- Don't wear sunglasses in dim or dark conditions.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist how your medications may affect your driving ability.
- ALWAYS wear a safety belt!

Avoid Risky Drive Times

Minimize or prevent high-stress situations by avoiding difficult traffic situations. Older drivers may continue to drive safely for many years by adjusting their habits to:

- Drive during daylight.
- Drive in good weather.
- Avoid rush-hour traffic.
- Limit fast-paced highway driving.



Find A Safe Way

Consider driving with a friend or map out and practice the safest ways to routine destinations: grocery stores, churches, doctors' offices, shopping centers, etc. Look for:

- Well-lit streets
- Left turns at controlled intersections with left turn arrows
- Clear signs and well-marked lanes
- Easy parking spaces

Go Back To School

A driving course just for older adults can update drivers on traffic laws and suggest useful ways to adapt their driving habits to accommodate aging. Some courses even qualify older drivers for a reduction in auto insurance costs. Courses may be offered locally, or through national organizations such as:

- AAA Mature Operators Program
- AARP Driver Safety Program
- National Safety Council

Drive A Safe Car

Look beyond the conventional safety features on a car. Like all drivers, older drivers should be sure their car offers a comfortable fit, maximum visibility and minimal physical strain. Consider these features:

- Height-adjustable seats
- Tilt or telescoping steering wheel
- Height-adjustable safety belt anchors
- Good visibility
- Legible instruments
- Large, glare-proof mirrors
- Push-button controls
- Power windows and door locks
- Power steering
- Equipment such as pedal extenders and hand controls (*for drivers with special needs*)

Get Physical

Strength, flexibility and overall wellness contribute to the ability of an older driver to remain a safe driver. Over the age of 65 (if not sooner), drivers should:

- Receive regular medical and eye exams to identify physical conditions that may affect driving.
- Consult with a doctor about exercising to maintain the flexibility and strength needed for safe driving.

Plan Ahead

Retiring from driving doesn't mean retiring from life. Plan ahead and learn about the options for getting around when driving isn't an option, such as:

- Public transportation (bus and subway services)
- Senior shuttles
- Relocating to a walkable community
- Community driving services
- Riding with family and friends
- Taxi services

How To Help An Older Driver

It's not easy to think about growing old, much less talk about it. Bringing up the subject of safe driving may be awkward, but if you can talk now, you and your family can have a plan for the coming years. Here are some tips for making conversation easier:

- **Recognize** that an older driver is not necessarily an unsafe driver. Decisions will be made based on the specific needs of the person and the situation.
- **Acknowledge** that giving up (or even limiting) driving is a big deal—symbolically and practically - for most older drivers.
- **Emphasize** that safety is most important.
- **Review** specific transportation needs and develop a way to accommodate them.
- **Agree** together on a plan of action. It may begin with avoiding risky driving situations, seeking education, rehabilitation or adaptive equipment and eventually lead to giving up the keys.

Resources

Many organizations have information and programs to help older drivers and those who care for them.

granddriver.net

www.granddriver.net or call toll-free 1-800-552-3402 (Nationwide Voice/TTY)

While most older drivers are good drivers, the physical changes associated with aging may affect their ability to drive safely. To make people aware of this, the GrandDriver Initiative has been launched to provide information about aging and its effects on driving.

Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA): The Integrated Roadmap for Aging in Virginia.

www.vda.virginia.gov or call toll-free 1-800-552-3402

(Nationwide Voice/TTY) or e-mail aging@vda.virginia.gov

VDA works with 25 local Area Agencies on Aging and other public and private organizations to help older Virginians and their families, friends and caregivers find the services and information they need to maintain their dignity, security and independence.

Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A)

www.vaavaa.org, E-mail info@thev4a.org or call (804) 644-2804

Helps older persons to live with dignity in their homes and communities for as long as possible. Works to enhance elder rights in Virginia. Also offers information and resources for older adults in their communities.

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

www.dmvnow.com, call toll-free 1-866-368-5463 or

1-800-435-5137, TDD toll-free 1-800-272-9268

DMV administers motor vehicle-related laws, advances transportation safety and collects and distributes transportation revenues in an ethical, security-sensitive manner.

American Automobile Association (AAA) - Mid-Atlantic

www.aamidatlantic.com or call toll-free 1-800-763-9900

The "On the Road/Mature Drivers" section of the AAA web site provides information on the effect of medications on driving, vision and driving, how to fine-tune driving skills and obtain senior-friendly vehicles. "Straight Talk for Mature Drivers" is available at your local AAA club. AAAs "Mature Driver" classes are taught by trained instructors who offer practical advice for drivers over age 55. Over 400 classes are conducted each year in Virginia.

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

www.seniordrivers.org or call (202) 638-5944

Provides information, videos and quizzes to help older drivers stay safe behind the wheel for as many years as possible.

AARP Driver Safety Program

www.aarp.org/drive or call toll-free 1-888-227-7669

Offers the nation's first and largest classroom driver refresher course.