



DRIVING & OLDER ADULTS

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Do you remember how excited you were when you finally got your first license to drive a car (without mom or dad)? You had independence! You could go where you wanted! You didn't have to depend on anyone to pick you up after a sports event! You could go to the mall and hang out with friends! Of course, all of that usually depended on mom or dad letting you have the family car. You thought you would never stop driving.

Now, 60+ years later you are starting to wonder if driving is all that exciting. Other drivers drive too fast. They change lanes without warning. You can't see well enough to drive at night. Car insurance keeps going up. You've had several traffic tickets in the past few years. You've hit the mailbox twice backing out of your driveway. These are all [warning signs](#) that maybe it's time to think about not driving anymore.

According to the [CDC](#), every day 20 older adults are killed in car crashes and another 540 are injured. In 2022, [the number of traffic deaths](#) in drivers 65+ were the highest since 1975. According to the [National Safety Council](#), about 67% of deaths in 2022 were either the older driver or their passenger. Of these, 724 were passengers age 65+ and 201 were passengers younger than 65. People killed in the other vehicles totaled 1,751. Non-occupants killed by elderly drivers account for 872 people. You and those you love don't want to be one of these statistics. So, what can you do?

The decision to continue driving should be based on many factors, not just age alone. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers a [self-assessment](#) of driving skills. The assessment looks at topics such as vision, physical fitness and reaction time. The CDC offers a [Mobility Plan](#) that can be downloaded. This is another good self-assessment and planning tool. Looking at your own situation helps you remain in control of what you are able to do. AARP offers a [safe driving course](#). There is a fee for the course and it is available online. In some communities the course may be offered in-person. Some insurance companies give a discount for completing the course. The American Automobile Association (AAA) has an online tool for self-assessment [Drivers: 65 Plus](#) that you can download.

These tools can also be used if you are concerned about the ability of an elderly parent, other relative, or friend. When it is time to have that conversation with your parents, other relatives or friends, there are several resources to help guide you. AARP offers a free online seminar [We Need to Talk](#) that helps you determine how to assess your loved ones' driving skills and provides tools to help you have this important conversation. The NHTSA cautions that [understanding](#) the attitudes, needs, values, life-style and behaviors of older adults is an important starting place for the conversation. Be prepared for resistance. Do your homework and have a list of available transportation services in your community. [Altenheim Resource and Referral Services](#) can help you identify these resources in any community, not just the local area. If a physical limitation is the reason for a person not driving safely, you may be able to modify the vehicle to make driving more accessible and safe. The NHTSA has some excellent resources for [Adapting a Vehicle](#).

The good news in all of this is that older adults are more likely to have safe driving habits than any other age group. Regardless of age, safe driving practices include always wearing the seat belt, not driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and driving when conditions are safest.