

SENIORS AND DRIVING

Driving is a very sensitive issue for most seniors. The more objective the family is about their driving skills and abilities the more successful the family will be in convincing the senior to limit their driving or stop driving altogether. Don't despair, there is help!

Manitoba Public Insurance sponsors the **Mature Driver Workshop**, organized by Safety Services Manitoba. This half-day workshop provides a refresher for older drivers by updating them on traffic laws, signs and signals markings and offers them practical advice on how to compensate for the physical effects of aging. For more information on the Mature Driver Workshop, contact Safety Services Manitoba at 204-949-1085.

To help educate maturing drivers, their friends and families, you can go to CAA's National web site and find plenty of resources under **How Aging Can Affect your Driving**. This site features online tools and information on how Vision, Hearing and Motor Skills can affect your ability to drive and much more. Did you know a 60 year old needs three times as much light to see the same as a 20 year old?

The **Older and Wiser Driver** 30 page publication can be found on the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat site and comes with a quiz and other helpful information.

There is a direct correlation between driving skills and medications in the body. Many drugs prescribed for seniors can impair driving skills. Over the counter medications can have the same effect. Alcohol combined with medication can be lethal.

Yearly vision exams are crucial to driving acuity.

- Glaucoma, cataracts and diabetic retinopathy are the most common eye conditions associated with aging.
- As people age, peripheral vision is reduced.
- As people age, they may have trouble telling different colors apart
- As people age, their eyes are more sensitive to bright lights
- As people age, night driving becomes more difficult

If problems exist, encourage the older person to consider the safety of others as they make the decision to change their driving habits.

A complete medical exam is necessary if there are indicators that driving performance is changing.

- Some diseases produce loss of consciousness

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- Loss of range of motion in neck, spine and limbs inhibit a person's ability to check the rear and sides of the road
- Weakness in the arms and legs can interfere with steering, braking and accelerating
- Eye-hand-foot coordination changes
- Reflexes change
- Fatigue affects driving

Physicians are required to report and explain findings that relate to driving skills to the DMV, Office of Driver Safety. For this reason, it is a good idea to let the physician inform the older driver that it is time to consider other forms of transportation. It takes the burden off the family member.

How to Negotiate Driving Privileges

The following questions are designed to assist family members to engage in non-emotional conversation to determine whether or not it is time for the senior to stop driving.

1. Sometimes when I drive at night, it's hard to see. Does this happen to you, too?
2. Do other drivers make you nervous? I know I get jumpy when everybody goes too fast.
3. Maintaining a car these days sure is expensive. How do you do it?
4. Isn't parking getting more difficult and expensive these days?
5. I just read about the Mature Drive workshop offered by MPI. What do you know about it?
6. What did the doctor say about your medications and driving?
7. How do you get around when your car is in the shop?
8. Have passengers refused to drive with you? What did you do then?
9. How about letting someone else drive for once?
10. What activities are you afraid of missing? Can anyone else help you get there?
11. When was your last eye exam? How did it go?
12. How much are you paying for car insurance these days?
13. What would you do if a carjacker approached your car?

If you don't feel safe driving with an elder, refuse to go with them or take two cars!