

Testing Driver Safety

When it comes to driving, there is no set age when people become less safe behind the wheel. Safety depends on both physical and mental health, which vary widely from person to person. However, the following items can be considered as warning signs and suggest that you should get tested for your ability to drive safely:

- Getting lost in familiar areas
- Ignoring traffic signs and signals
- Becoming easily agitated or angered when driving
- Falling asleep or being unable to concentrate when driving
- Reacting too slowly to dangerous situations
- Forgetting or ignoring driving basics – when to yield right of way, for example
- Having trouble judging distances

Several tests and reviews can help determine how safe a driver an older adult may be.

If you feel that you are having difficulty driving safely, consider taking these actions:

Start with a good physical.

Have your primary care healthcare provider examine you for changes that may affect your driving, including your fitness level.

Have your vision checked.

An optometrist or an ophthalmologist can evaluate your vision for problems that may reduce your ability to drive safely.

Get a driving evaluation.

An occupational therapist trained as a driving rehabilitation specialist can evaluate your driving to see how safe you are when driving, or if you could benefit from having your skills rehabilitated. Occupational therapists can thoroughly review your general skills and note areas that need improvement.

Consider cognitive testing.

If you're concerned that you may be having memory problems, dementia, or other problems that affect your ability to think and make decisions, talk to your primary care provider. The provider can do some simple tests to assess your mental skills and determine whether you have the mental ability to drive safely.

Check your state's rules.

Many states have laws that require testing or other requirements for older drivers. Also, check your driver's license to see when it's time for renewal. Learn more about specific state requirements [here](#):
<https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/mature%20drivers>

Know your medications.

Some medications can make you feel drowsy and less alert than usual, or can affect reaction time and other attention issues. Some prescriptions may warn against driving while taking the medication. Review your medications with your primary care provider or a pharmacist to see if your medication(s) could lead to unsafe driving.

Resources

[Vision testing for older adults](https://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/good-vision-throughout-life/adult-vision-19-to-40-years-of-age/adult-vision-over-60-years-of-age?sso=y)

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[Eye care for older adults](https://www.aao.org/eye-care-for-older-adults)

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[Safety: Older adult drivers](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/older_adult_drivers/)

https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/older_adult_drivers/

[Evaluations for older drivers](https://www.aota.org/about-occupational-therapy/professionals/rdp/articles/older-drivers.aspx)

<https://www.aota.org/about-occupational-therapy/professionals/rdp/articles/older-drivers.aspx>

[Dementia and driving](https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/dementia-driving)

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/dementia-driving>

[Self-Assessment test for older drivers](https://seniordriving.aaa.com/evaluate-your-driving-ability/)

<https://seniordriving.aaa.com/evaluate-your-driving-ability/>

[Organizations that provide testing and instruction for older drivers](https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Driving%20Safely%20Aging%20Web/page8.html)

<https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Driving%20Safely%20Aging%20Web/page8.html>

[A self-rating tool for older drivers to check their performance](https://seniordriving.aaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Driver652.pdf)

<https://seniordriving.aaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Driver652.pdf>

[Fitness-to-Drive Screening Measure Online](http://fitnesstodrive.phhp.ufl.edu/us/)

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