# Senior Scene





# What aging drivers can do to improve their driving skills

Motor vehicles have come a long way since the days of the Model T. Safety features in particular have undergone significant enhancements over the last several decades. Improvements in airbags, structural modifications like crumple zones and technological features like automatic emergency braking have helped to make modern vehicles far safer than the cars and trucks of yesteryear.

While there's no denying that modern vehicles are safer than ever, the human element remains an unpredictable variable. Even in an era marked by vehicles with greatly enhanced safety features, distracted or impaired drivers can compromise the well-being of everyone on the road. Age is another variable unique to each driver that merits consideration when considering road safety. The National Institute on Aging notes that certain conditions associated with aging, including increased stiffness of muscles and joints, can make it difficult for seniors to safely operate motor vehicles. Seniors who want to ensure they're safe to drive can take various steps to ensure they are not compromising their own safety or the safety of others when getting behind the wheel.

• Have your driving skills assessed by a trained professional. The NIA notes that the American Occupational Therapy Association maintains a database of driving specialists who can help seniors assess their skills behind the wheel. These trained professionals may assess existing skills and offer advice about how to overcome any issues aging drivers might be having.

• Take a driving course. Safe driving courses can help drivers of all ages stay up-to-date on the latest safety protocols and advice on how to drive safely. Modern driving is vastly different than it was when many current seniors became licensed drivers. A safe driving course can refresh drivers' memories about safety protocols, and some may even offer advice on how to navigate modern roadways, which may be marked by distracted drivers and feature vehicles with brighter headlights that can make it more difficult for older drivers to drive at night.

• Speak with your physicians about your medications. A recent study from the U.S. Food and Drug Adminstration found that the average adult age 65 and older now uses roughly four medications. Medications produce side effects that can affect every area of a user's life, including their ability to drive. Those effects might be heightened when taking more than one medication, and interactions also can lead to side effects that might not manifest if individuals were taking just one prescription. Aging drivers can maintain an honest and ongoing dialogue with their physicians to ensure they're aware of the effects their medications might be having on their ability to drive safely. Report any new side effects the moment they appear.

Aging can compromise seniors' ability to safely operate motor vehicles. But aging adults can employ various strategies to improve their skills.

# What seniors can do to safeguard their mental health

Mental health has increasingly been noted as a key ingredient to an individual health regimen. The stigma once assigned to mental health issues has largely dissipated, and many people now recognize that mental health should be just as big a priority as physical health.

Seniors may not have come of age in a world where mental health was prioritized, and thanks to that aging men and women may not recognize where their mental health is suffering and what they can do to combat such problems. Recognition of the importance of mental health is a step in the right direction, and seniors also can consider these strategies to safeguard their mental health.

• Recognize your vulnerability. The World Health Organization notes older adults are uniquely vulnerable to potential mental health issues. That's because mental health is shaped by numerous variables, including earlier life experiences and some notable stressors related to aging, such as a decline in functional ability that can cause psychological distress. Seniors also are more likely than others to experience adverse events like the loss of a loved one or even a loss of purpose, which can affect anyone upon retirement. Recognition of this vulnerability may be enough to compel seniors to seek advice and assistance on how to safeguard their mental health from age-related stressors.

• Take time out if you're a caregiver. The WHO notes that many older adults serve as caregivers for spouses with chronic health conditions, including dementia. The Alzheimer's Association reports that studies have found that 70 percent of caregivers report feeling stress related to coordination of care, while two in three caregivers have difficulty finding resources and support for their needs. Seniors who have taken on caregiving duties for a loved one must protect their own mental health by taking time out to care for themselves as well. Work with family members to share responsibilities when caring for a loved one. If family members cannot pitch in, then work with local government agencies to alleviate some of the stress of caregiving.

• Make a concerted effort to socialize. A 2025 report from the WHO indicated that roughly one-fourth of all older adults are affected by social isolation and loneliness. Social connection can significantly improve mental health and provide a sense of life satisfaction while improving quality of life. Seniors are urged to prioritize socialization. Many community-based groups, including government offices, run programs designed specifically to facilitate socialization among older residents. Take advantage of such programs whenever possible. Seniors living alone also may want to consider relocating to communities exclusive to people age 55 and over, as such developments typically offer an array of socialization opportunities to residents.

Seniors are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, but older adults can take many steps to safeguard their mental health.








