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Older Driver Safety

Seniors, Families & Friends...

# Stay Safe on the Roads

Most drivers want to stay on the road as long as possible. One's ability to drive safely, however, changes with time and life circumstances. While certain abilities decline with age, everyone ages differently. Driving safety is complex —there is a lot to consider and understand.

## **Driving health changes over time.... Don't ignore warning signs.**

Maryland's Motor Vehicle Administration publishes a version of this self-assessment tool to help older drivers recognize shortcomings and plan for the effects of aging:

### **Has this happened to you?**

- A friend or family member has expressed concern about your driving
- You sometimes get lost while driving on routes that were once familiar
- You have been pulled over by a police officer and warned of poor driving
- You have had several moving violations, near misses, or actual crashes
- Your healthcare provider has advised you to restrict or stop driving

### **What You Can Do**

- Listen to what people say who know you best and care the most about you.
- Discuss driving with your doctor. He or she can evaluate the interactions and side effects of medicines you may be taking, as well as your functional abilities.
- Refresh your knowledge of safe driving practices through a mature driver class.
- Begin planning for alternative ways of getting around. Find out about mobility options and try them out to see what works best for you.

## **Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration's Medical Advisory Board provides recommendations to MVA on general policies and on individual cases of drivers with medical conditions that can impact on their ability to drive safely.**

- The Medical Advisory Board (MAB) consists of physicians from various medical specialties.
- The board assesses medical fitness to drive by reviewing medical information of drivers referred to them.
- MAB does not perform medical examinations, but may request additional information or evaluations of those referred, which may include a functional capacity screening and/or an evaluation by a driving rehabilitation specialist.
- Depending on the severity and the progress of the medical condition, the MAB may re-evaluate individual cases at various intervals.

## **Drivers, professionals and concerned residents can make referrals to the Medical Advisory Board**

- Self-reports of any medical condition can be done at the MVA office anytime.
- Referrals from professionals-especially law enforcement and health care providers-are reported directly to MVA if there are concerns about medical fitness to drive.
- Concerned residents such as neighbors, friends and family can refer drivers to the Medical Advisory Board by calling MVA's Driver Wellness and Safety Division, 410-768-7511.

## **According to the MVA...**

If you have serious concerns about a loved one, the best thing to do is talk with his or her healthcare provider. He or she can contact the MVA directly with the necessary information, which will expedite the review process.



## Frequently asked Questions about Older Driver Safety

### I want to drive as long as possible. What should I do?

Understand and improve your driving health.

- Have regular check-ups. Check your: physical fitness, especially neck flexibility and the sensation in your feet; vision; and cognition, especially attention and reaction time.
- Talk to medical caregivers and/or pharmacists about potential medication interactions or side effects that could make safe driving difficult.
- Join a senior-oriented fitness program or exercise class.

Enroll in AARP's Smart Driver Program, 877-846-3299.

A calendar with scheduled classes and locations throughout Montgomery County is online: [www.aarpdriversafety.org](http://www.aarpdriversafety.org). Search by zip code and preferred distance from home. (Some insurance companies provide discounts to people who take the class.)

Drive a senior-friendly car.

- Adjust side view mirrors to reduce blind spots.
- Consider investing in new technologies such as large wide-angle mirrors and large rear windows; high-contrast instrument panels; front and rear parking sensors; and thick steering wheels.
- Improve the "fit" of your vehicle for safety and comfort. Read about the "Car Fit" program at <http://seniordriving.aaa.com/CarFit>. For information on starting a program, contact [jbeddick@aaamidlantic.com](mailto:jbeddick@aaamidlantic.com).

### I don't know how to bring up this topic or talk about it.

Keep in mind that this topic likely will involve many conversations. Being prepared will help the discussion go more smoothly. Ideally, discussing a plan of action happens before problems emerge.

- The Hartford: *We Need to Talk...Family Conversations with Older Drivers* is available online. Go to <http://www.thehartford.com/mature-market-excellence/family-conversations-with-older-drivers>.
- AARP offers a free online seminar called *We Need to Talk* that will help you assess your loved one's driving skills and provides guidance to help you with the important conversation. Go to: [http://www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/we\\_need\\_to\\_talk/](http://www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/we_need_to_talk/).
- American Automobile Association's website includes a section called *Conversations about Safe Driving*. Go to: <http://seniordriving.aaa.com/resources-family-friends/conversations-about-driving>.

### I know I should stop driving but I don't know how else I am going to get around.

#### Taxis are so expensive. What should I do?

Driving is expensive, too, when one considers the costs of buying or leasing a vehicle, insurance, maintenance, gas, parking, registration, emissions testing, etc.

- Montgomery County funds Connect-a-Ride, a free information and referral program that helps older adults find the transportation they need. Call 301-738-3252 or e-mail [connectaride@AccessJCA.org](mailto:connectaride@AccessJCA.org).
- Connect-a-Ride also offers *Ride Smart Travel Training* to teach residents how to use the County's free Ride On service for seniors, Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Refer to "Montgomery County Transportation Options for Older Adults" (attached or available online).

### I am worried about my mother. She is not as sharp as she used to be, doesn't hear well and stops at most intersections, even when the light is green. What should I do?

Encourage her to consult a local driving rehabilitation specialist for an assessment of her abilities and recommendations for adjustments or alternatives.

- Adventist Rehabilitation Hospital of Maryland, Driver Rehabilitation Program, 240-864-6202
- Baker Driving Rehabilitation, 240-575-5856