

How to Help the Older Driver

As experienced drivers grow older, changes in their vision, attention and physical abilities may cause them to drive less safely than they used to. Sometimes these changes happen so slowly that the drivers are not even aware that their driving safety is at risk.

If you have questions about a loved one's driving safety, here's what you can do to help him or her stay safe AND mobile.

Is your loved one a safe driver?

If you have the chance, go for a ride with your loved one. Look for the following warning signs in his or her driving:

- Forgets to buckle up
- Does not obey stop signs or traffic lights
- Fails to yield the right of way
- Drives too slowly or too quickly
- Often gets lost, even on familiar routes
- Stops at a green light or at the wrong time
- Makes poor driving decisions
- Doesn't stay in his or her lane
- Is honked at or passed often
- Reacts slowly to driving situations
- Doesn't seem to notice other cars, walkers or bike riders on the road

Other signs of unsafe driving include:

- Recent near misses or fender benders
- Recent tickets for moving violations
- Comments from passengers about close calls, near misses or the driver not seeing other vehicles
- Recent increase in the car insurance premium

Riding with or following this person every once in a while is one way to keep track of his or her driving. Another way is to talk to this person's spouse or friend.



If you are concerned about your loved one's driving, what can you do?

Talk to your loved one. Say that you are concerned about his or her driving safety. Does he or she share your concern?

- Don't bring up your concerns in the car! It's dangerous to distract the driver. Wait until you have his or her full attention.
- Explain why you are concerned. Give specific reasons— for example, recent fender benders, getting lost or running stop signs.
- Realize that your loved one may become upset or defensive. After all, driving is important for independence and self-esteem.
- If your loved one doesn't want to talk about driving at this time, bring it up again later. Your continued concern and support may help him or her feel more comfortable with the topic.
- Be a good listener. Take your loved one's concerns seriously.



www.fcsafecommunities.com

Help Make plans for transportation. When your loved one is ready to talk about his or her driving safety, you can work together to create plans for future safety.

- Make a formal agreement about driving. In this agreement, your loved one chooses a person to tell him or her when it is no longer safe to drive. This person then agrees to help your loved one make the transition to driving retirement.
- Help create a transportation plan (see below). Your loved one may rely less on driving if he or she has other ways to get around.

Encourage a visit to the doctor. The doctor can check your loved one's medical history, list of medicines and current health to see if any of these may be affecting his or her driving safety. The doctor can also provide treatment to help improve driving safety.

Encourage your loved one to take a driving test. A driver rehabilitation specialist (DRS) can assess your loved one's driving safety through an office exam and driving test. The DRS can also teach special techniques or suggest special equipment to help him or her drive more safely. The following agencies offer DRS services:

OSU Medical Center
2050 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43221
(614) 293.3833

Scioto Community/Capital Health Services
433 Obetz Road
Columbus, OH 43207
(614) 491.2000

AAA Roadwise is a user-friendly software for older adults that can help them assess their functional ability and provides feedback on their results and how to get additional help. Visit www.seniordrivers.org for more information.



How to help when your loved one retires from driving

At some point, your loved one may need to stop driving for his or her own safety and the safety of others on the road. You and your loved one may come to this decision yourselves or at the recommendation of a physician, driver rehabilitation specialist, driving instructor or the Department of Motor Vehicles. When someone close to you retires from driving, there are several things you can do to make this easier for him or her:

Create a transportation plan. It's often easier for people to give up driving if they have other ways to get around. Help your loved one create a list of "tried and true" ride options. This list can include:

- Names and numbers of friends or family willing to give rides
- Specific bus numbers and stops (ride with them the first time).
- Check with some of these local services that offer transportation options for seniors:
- Phone number of local cab companies
- Phone number for a shuttle service

Franklin County Senior Options
614.462.6200

American Red Cross of Greater Columbus
614.253.6705

Senior Independence
614.433.0031

If your loved one can't go shopping, help him or her shop from home. Arrange for medications and groceries to be delivered. Explore on-line ordering or subscribe to catalogues. Make a list of services that make house calls, such as hairdressers or barbers.

Encourage social activities. Visits with friends, time spent at the senior center and volunteer work are important for one's health and well-being. When creating a transportation plan, don't forget to include rides to social activities. It's important for your loved one to maintain social ties and keep spirits high during this time of adjustment.

Be there for your loved one. Let your loved one know that he or she has your support. Offer help willingly and be a good listener. This is an emotionally difficult time, and it's important to show that you care.