Senior Driving

Aging affects everyone differently with some seniors remaining active and agile throughout their senior years. Others do not. Many seniors are at risk for road accidents and are more likely to receive traffic citations for not following the rules of the road. Seniors involved in accidents are more likely to be seriously injured than younger people and fatal crash rates rise after the age of 70.

Risk Factors

Visual decline - As we age our vision declines. We lose the ability to process light as well as we used to and our perception of depth is also affected. According to AgeNet.com, a 60 year old needs three times as much light as a 20 year old needs to drive at night.

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Hearing loss - The ability to hear is also affected as we age which causes more difficulty in hearing things such as sirens, honking horns or other important warnings we need to be aware of while driving.

Reaction Time - Driving a car requires a full range of motion and quick reflexes. Aging causes us to lose mobility and increases our reaction time. Various health issues like arthritis, sleep apnea, and dementia can also affect our reaction time.

Medications - Some medications can increase driving risks. Mixing with alcohol only worsens the risks. Be aware of all side effects of medications before driving a vehicle of any type.

Drowsiness - Aging can increase the tendency to doze off during the day. Also, some prescription drugs cause drowsiness. You must remain fully alert while driving.

Brain disorders - Dementia or other brain disorders makes driving very dangerous. Delayed reactions can result in injury or death while driving.

Warning Signs of Decrease Driving Abilities

- Confusion while driving
- Dents and scrapes on the car
- Driving on the wrong side of the road
- Fearful while driving
- Frustration of other drivers
- Increase in traffic citations or accidents

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- Jerky stops or starts
- Lack of attention to surroundings
- Lane drifting
- Loss of direction
- Mobility limitations – not as agile as should be
- Running stop signs and red lights
- Slow reflexes
- Sudden lane changes, braking, or acceleration
- Turn signals not used properly

Safer Driving Tips

- Avoid night driving, rush hour, or being on the road in bad weather
- Exercise regularly to maintain strength and flexibility
- Increase the space between his/her car and the one in front
- Limit trips in the car to shorter distances
- Medications should not interfere with alertness or ability to drive
- Obtain regular medical check-ups, including hearing and vision
- Plan and know the route in advance

Sources:

AARP	*http://www.aarp.org/*
HelpGuide.Org	*http://www.helpguide.org*
SeniorDriver.Org	*www.seniordrivers.org*

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