

# Are You Fit to Drive?



Most seniors are capable drivers and have a lifetime of valuable driving experience behind them. For these reasons, decisions about a person's ability to drive should never be based on age alone. However, changes in vision, physical fitness and reflexes may cause you and your loved ones safety concerns about your ability to continue driving. People who accurately

assess these changes can adjust their driving habits so that they stay safe on the road, or choose other kinds of transportation.

- Good vision is essential for good driving habits. But, as people age, everyone experiences declines in vision. Do you have symptoms of declining vision such as problems reading street signs; trouble seeing lane lines and other pavement markings; or you experience more discomfort at night from the glare of oncoming headlights?
- Diminished strength, coordination and flexibility can have a major impact on your ability to safely control your car. Do you have trouble looking over your shoulder to change lanes or looking left and right to check traffic at intersections? Do you have trouble moving your foot from the gas to the brake pedal or



turning the steering wheel?

- Driving requires dividing your attention between multiple activities and being able to react quickly to situations that often arise without warning. Do you show signs of having decreased attention and reaction time such as feeling overwhelmed by all of the signs, signals, road markings, pedestrians and vehicles that you must pay attention to at intersections? The gaps in traffic are harder to judge, making it more difficult to turn left at intersections or to merge with traffic when turning right. Or are you slow to see cars coming out of driveways and side streets or to realize that another car has slowed or stopped ahead of you?

While everyone wants to keep driving for as long as possible, no one wants to be a threat to themselves or to others because they are no longer able to drive safely. Self-awareness is the key. People who can accurately assess their fitness to drive can adjust their driving habits, and stay safe on the road. However, it may not always be obvious when a general health problem, vision problem, or a side effect of a medication will lead to a driving impairment. That's when the observations of loved ones and health professionals are most vital. With smart self-management and the advice of outside observers,

