



# MATURE DRIVERS and ROAD SAFETY

Friends and Family



Older drivers are often good drivers and age on its own is not enough reason to give up driving or seek help. However, if you're concerned about an older friend or relative, it may be a good time to talk to them about their driving.

The initial conversation around perceived driving issues can be challenging and will evoke a great deal of emotion. It may be seen as controlling, and someone faced with what they perceive as

a loss of independence may resist an offer of help. Concerned family or friends will be reluctant to raise the subject if the driver is worried they will lose their independence.

Taking the step to hang up those car keys is as significant as the day they passed their test. This is a massive step in life but does not mean they have to give up on everything; the options are out there and life can still be rewarding even after someone has retired from driving.

### They may have given you good cause for your concern, and here are some of the key signs:

- Upper body rotational issues (can they turn and see behind when reversing?)
- Late braking (slow reaction times)
- Covering the brake pedal
- Hitting kerbs
- Revving the engine (especially when parking)
- **Failing** to signal or incorrect signaling
- **Driving** significantly below the speed limit
- **Difficulty** in making a turn into junctions
- **General** confusion
- **Refusal** or reluctance to drive at night
- **Only** driving close to home, or familiar places
- **Recent** dents or damage to the car (often they cannot explain how it occurred)

## Through research we see that older drivers tend to:

- Be less likely to speed (often well below the speed limit)
- Have difficulty in negotiating junctions
- Fail to predict hazards or slower to react to them
- Fail to judge merging speeds when joining traffic
- Process situations slower
- Become confused or hesitant in right of way situations

Having a discussion early is the best way to address any issues. Early intervention, support and practical help, may identify ways the driver can keep driving, safely for longer.

## Steps to safer driving

We have to establish the driver is medically safe to drive:

- Get an eyesight test with an optician. They must be able to read a car number plate from 20m, with your glasses or contact lenses if you use them.
- Are they on any medication which may affect their ability to drive?

Are there any medical issues? Some medical conditions must be reported to DVLA. Failure to report medical conditions may result in prosecution. Further information is available by visiting [Health conditions and driving](#)



## Eyesight

We have already mentioned that a reluctance to drive at night may develop as a person ages. As we get older our ability to recover from glare (opposing headlights) reduces, and this can be worrying for a driver. This is a factor as to why many older drivers rarely drive at night, although we have to remember that as we get older there are just less reasons to go out after dark. Those drivers 65+ may suffer in other low light conditions too, as our eyes lack the ability to react quickly to light changes.

## How we see

In simplified terms, when we look it seems like the world is a video. However, what actually happens is the eye takes snap shots as we pan around, we do not see everything, and the brain fills the gaps so we see the 'video'. Only when we stop panning and concentrate do we see the detail.

As we get older the brain may not always fill the gaps, quickly enough or at all when driving and results in black or blind spots where there are no fillers. This can be the moment when a driver looks but fails to see the other vehicle, pedestrian, cyclist or even parked car.

Common eyesight factors

- **Cataracts** (causing blurring)
- **Tunnel** vision (loss of peripheral vision)
- **Macular** degeneration (central vision deterioration)
- **Diabetic** Retinopathy (patchy vision, lack of sharpness)
- **Glaucoma** (loss of peripheral vision – tunnel vision)
- **Retinitis** Pigmentosa (tunnel vision)

Regular eye sight testing can pick up most, if not all, of these issues. Early intervention will highlight any issues. If they are over 60 the eyesight test is free. Further information is available by visiting: [Eyesight rules](#)

## A course

So drivers do not become too complacent about their abilities we ask that they consider taking a voluntary driver assessment. There is no pass or fail, just an opportunity to brush up on skills, and perhaps reduce the bad habits that have been picked up over the years. The consequences of being involved in a collision can be life changing, and is something that we all want to avoid.

Undertaking voluntary driving appraisals and regular eyesight tests may reduce the risk of being involved in a collision and also reassure you that they are safe. Our primary aim is to allow older drivers to continue driving safely for as long as they want to, within the constraints of their health and the safety of others.

Further information is available from:

Northamptonshire Safer Roads Alliance

Email: [roadsafety@kierwsp.co.uk](mailto:roadsafety@kierwsp.co.uk)

Older Drivers Forum

Email: [www.olderdrivers.org.uk](http://www.olderdrivers.org.uk)