

Safe Driving Tips

Hearing

About one-third of drivers between ages 65 - 74 and one-half of those age 85 and older have hearing problems. The ability to hear high-pitched sounds reduces first making sirens difficult to hear. Background noises can significantly distort sound and interfere with your driving. A turn signal left on because you don't hear it can confuse other drivers. Follow these important hearing safety tips:

- Have your hearing checked annually.
- Turn off the radio when driving.
- Do not use cell phones while driving.
- Replace noisy mufflers/exhaust pipes.
- Keep air conditioner or heater fan on low to reduce background noise.

Vision

Because 95% of the cues you get while driving come through sight, you must recognize and understand these age-related changes in vision: slower focusing, poor vision in dim light, difficulty seeing in bright sun or glare, and reduced peripheral vision. These changes might not show up on a routine eye exam but they do affect your ability to drive safely. It is important to be able to see road signs, signals, pedestrians, and other vehicles in order to be a safe driver. Follow these important vision safety tips:

- Have your vision checked annually.
- Keep your glasses, windows, mirrors, and headlights clean.

- Clean windows inside and out.
- Avoid driving at night and when visibility is poor.
- Give your eyes a few minutes to adjust to changes in light and dark. Use this time to fasten seat belt properly and adjust mirrors.
- If you can't see over the steering wheel, sit on a cushion or pillow and make certain you are able to reach the gas and brake pedals easily.

Changes in Muscles, Bones and Joints

Aging can bring slower reflexes, loss of muscle strength, joint flexibility, and brittle bones. Slower reflexes, combined with even minor vision loss can make ordinary driving situations dangerous. Follow these important safety tips:

- Give yourself time to react.
- Stay at least 3 seconds behind the car in front of you.
- Drive defensively. Watch out for the other drivers' mistakes.
- Stiff joints make turning your head to see behind you difficult. Turn your body to improve your vision.
- As muscles lose strength, turning the steering wheel gets harder, don't swing wide on turns to compensate.
- Tired muscles or sore joints distract you. On long trips, stop to rest every two hours and always buckle up.
- Talk to your physician about how your own personal health issues can impact your driving.

How Safe is Your Driving?



Safe Driving Quiz & Tips

The natural physical changes from normal aging impact the ability to drive safely. That's why drivers over 65 have more accidents per mile driven than any other age group except teenagers. This information is provided in order to help individuals assess the safety of their own driving abilities. In addition, the safe driving tips can help drivers to remain safe as long as possible.

This brochure is brought to you by:
Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles
Nebraska Medical Association
Nebraska Office of Highway Safety

Medications and Alcohol

Both prescription and over-the-counter medications have side effects that can affect the ability to drive safely. Whenever taking any medication, be certain to ask the pharmacist or physician about driving. Drinking alcohol impairs judgment, slows reflexes, distorts decision-making, and hinders coordination. You don't have to be a problem drinker to have an alcohol-related driving problem, because tolerance decreases with age. Also note that alcohol, combined with over-the-counter or prescription drugs, can have a significant impact on driving ability.

Condition	Medication	Potential Side Effects
Arthritis and Rheumatism	Analgesics	Drowsiness, Ringing Ears
Allergies/ Common Cold	Antihistamines	Drowsiness, Confusion, Reduced Reaction Time, Blurred Vision, Dizziness
Diabetes	Anti-diabetics	Drowsiness, Inability to Concentrate
Hypertension	Antihypertensive	Drowsiness, Dizziness, Blurred Vision
Weight control	Stimulants	Nervousness, Over Excitability
Anxiety	Sedatives	Drowsiness, Staggering, Blurred Vision
Depression	Antidepressants	Drowsiness, Dizziness

Take the Safe Driving Self Quiz!

Self-awareness is the key to safe driving. Are you at risk for a traffic accident? Are you a danger to pedestrians and other drivers? Has your driving ability deteriorated at such a pace that you have not noticed the change? This quiz has been designed to help you assess your own driving ability.

This self quiz is NOT a part of the driving examination.

	Yes	No	Sometimes
With the car windows rolled up, can you hear a siren or horn?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you hear the sound of your own turn signals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you comfortable driving at night?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you see clearly at night?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you go outside in the bright sunlight and see clearly right away?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you see clearly over the steering wheel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you turn your head an equal distance from one side to the other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you turn your head and neck far enough to see over your shoulder?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you drive for 30 minutes without your fingers, hands and/or arms becoming tingly or numb?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you keep a firm but comfortable grip on the steering wheel with both hands while keeping your elbows bent and relaxed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you lift your arm high enough to adjust the rearview mirror?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you cross one hand over the other when turning the wheel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you depress the brake pedal with your knee bent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you always use your right foot to depress the brake pedal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you sit for 15 minutes without your feet and/or legs becoming tingly or numb?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you always wear both your shoulder and lap seat belt?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the past year have you been crash and/or ticket free?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you easily decide when to enter a lane of moving traffic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are intersections easy for you to navigate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you always find familiar places when driving?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered no or sometimes to the above questions, please review the safe driving tips to improve your own driving safety.

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