

Older Drivers

As a life long driver, by the time we reach our 60s and 70s, we will have acquired a wealth of motoring experience which should help us travel safely on our busy roads.

Statistically, elderly drivers are less likely to have a crash than young and inexperienced drivers.

Experience however has to be balanced with the inevitable effects of ageing. With time physiological and psychological changes can affect our ability to drive safely. These changes don't start at any specific age. They are gradual and there is no necessary correspondence between "biological age" and "age in years" but, for the population as a whole, from age 60 onwards, the risk of being involved in a blameworthy crash increases steadily.

Senses

Our sight, hearing and judgement of speed and distance are not quite as sharp as when you were younger. These are all vital factors in driving and they often deteriorate very gradually, so you may not be immediately aware of the full extent of the change.

Eyesight

It is particularly important to have regular eyesight checks with a qualified optician. If you are unable to meet the required eyesight standard of reading a number plate at 67ft (the length of a cricket pitch) in good daylight, you are committing an offence. If you need spectacles or contact lenses to meet this standard, make sure you wear them when you drive. If you can meet the standard but have cataracts, avoid night driving on unlit roads and driving against the glare of bright sunlight. If you have glaucoma or any other eye disease consult your doctor or specialist about your fitness to drive and, if so advised, report the condition to DVLA.

Physical Movement

Arthritis or stiffness will restrict your movements and your ability to make effective all round observations, and can also affect our vehicle handling skills. There are special accessories designed to meet the needs of older drivers. A General Practitioner can advise on exercises that can also help.

Reaction Times

Driving safely requires good awareness. Observation errors and misinterpretation of information are common factors in crashes involving older drivers. Reaction times get slower with age. Be prepared to make adjustments when age related changes affect your safe driving performance.

Medicines

Older drivers are often unaware of the effects that medicines (even non-prescription ones) can have on their concentration. Check with the doctor or pharmacist about the side effects of any medication prescribed for you.

Highway Code

Research has shown widespread ignorance of the provisions of the Highway Code. Ignorance of the law is never an excuse. It is never too late to refresh your knowledge to keep up with the changes.

Driving Licence renewal

Drivers who wish to continue driving after the age of 70 have to renew their licence every three years. This means completing a form that makes a health declaration. Licence application forms and information leaflets are available from most Post Offices.

All drivers are required by law to notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) of the onset or worsening of a medical condition which might affect ability to drive safely, including eyesight problems.

These legal requirements are intended to ensure your safety and that of other road users, but responsibility for deciding when you should give up driving rests largely with you.