Effects of Aging on Driving Skills
What You Should Know

- For most American adults, driving is necessary.
- However, driving skills inevitably deteriorate with age.
What You Should Know

- Fragility begins to increase at ages 60 to 64.
- Driving-related injuries are greater among older motorists.
- At age 85, the driver fatality rate is 9 times higher than for drivers age 25 - 69.
How Aging Affects Driving

Physical changes occur in driving related capabilities

1. Slower reaction time
2. Flexibility decreases
3. Eyesight deteriorates
4. Hearing sensitivity decreases
5. Muscle strength decreases
Certain Medical Conditions

common among older adults increase the risk of unsafe driving.

1. High Blood Pressure
2. Arthritis
3. Alzheimer’s disease/dementia (memory loss)
4. Heart disease
5. Diabetes
6. Parkinson’s disease
Medications

Many OTC or prescription medications weaken driving skills by causing drowsiness, reduction of energy, slower reaction times, and impaired vision.

- Some antihistamines
- Benzodiazepines (such as Xanax and Valium)
- Antidepressants
- Glaucoma medications
- Muscle relaxants
Understanding Changing Abilities

AGE & SAFETY

- While Older adults are among the safest on the road

- Older adults are more likely to be injured or killed in a vehicle

- Older adults do need to give more attention to driving safely
Physical Effects Of Aging

Weakening Vision. As we age, we

- Recover from glare more slowly.
- Have increased trouble focusing on nearby objects.
- Are slower at transitioning between near and far objects.
- Need more light to see clearly, as pupil reaction time slows and the eye lens thickens.
- May experience disease such as cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration that compound these problems.
Physical Effects Of Aging

- A Decrease in Hearing and Fitness Occurs
  - Lose hearing acuity
  - Lose strength and flexibility in arms, legs, hips and shoulders
  - Experience joint pain and inflammation, which affect manual dexterity.
  - Lose mobility in neck and back.
  - Become more prone to fatigue
Physical Effects Of Aging

- Diminished Concentration and Reaction Time
  - We processes signals and perceive sensory data more slowly.
  - We become less able to focus on multiple tasks
  - We need more information to select options and make decisions
What You Should Do

- If you have concerns that your loved one is no longer able to drive safely, you have a responsibility to act.

- Assess your loved one’s skills. Ride with your elder and watch for signs of unsafe driving.

- Discuss your concerns, talk with your elder about your observations and concerns and be very clear and specific about the problems you noticed.
Schedule a Driving Evaluation

A driving evaluation can determine if your elder should change driving techniques or stop driving.
What You Should Do

- Schedule a Physical
  A physical can assess your elder’s driving ability by testing reflexes, strength, and other factors.
What You Should Do

- Schedule Eye and Hearing Exams
  These exams can determine if your elder’s eyesight meets the State’s visual requirements for driving and if hearing remains sufficient.
Texas Law

- At age 79, drivers may not use alternative methods to renew licenses. This permits a vision test if needed.

- At age 85, license renewal must be in person and a vision test is required.
Texas Law

- A license can be administratively suspended or revoked
  - For causing a serious accident
  - Becoming incompetent to drive
  - 4 or more convictions for moving violations in a 12 month period
  - Habitual reckless or negligent driving
  - Failure to provide medical information when requested
  - Failure to take or pass an examination when requested
Facing Resistance

- The issues involved with safe driving are very personal. You should avoid confrontations. Your elder may become emotional, defensive, or angry when their driving skills are in question. If your love one continues to drive, you may need to take additional measures.
Facing Resistance

- Carry Out An Intervention

Family members and anyone else respected by your elder should speak with your loved one about driving skills in attempt to overcome your elder’s denial of the issue.
Facing Resistance

- **Take The Keys**
  While this measure is drastic, it may be necessary to preserve the safety of your loved one, other drivers, and pedestrians.
Alternatives

- Determine Needs of the Elder by accessing community resources
  - Local hospital, community service agencies, community centers, and churches.

- Meeting needs of your elder
  - Compare the convenience and value of available modes of transportation.
  - Plan ahead. Schedule appointments, errands, shopping, and appointments.
Summary

- Review physical changes, medical conditions, and medications with your elder

- Assess skills. Discuss with your elder your concerns and observations

- Conduct a driving evaluation as well as a physical and eye and hearing examinations
- Have the elder conduct a “Driving Self-Evaluation”

- Discuss driving alternatives and available modes of transportation
Summary

- If you are gracefully aging:
  - Drive Safely
  - Acknowledge your Physical Changes
  - Drive Sensibly
Thank you for your time and if you would like more information please go to the following website

www.usaaedfoundation.org

Or

For brochures or presentations please contact us at 825-2551 or safe.communities@tamucc.edu