

Driving Safety in Older Adults: Identifying Risk & Planning Transitions



Yikes!

Driving is closely tied to independence in older adults; however, age-related physical and cognitive changes impact driving ability. Identifying risk factors early allows for safer transitions and reduces adverse outcomes.

- Older drivers have higher crash rates per mile compared to middle-aged adults.
- Cognitive impairment significantly increases driving risk.

(Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

Safe Driving vs. At-Risk Driving in Older Adults

Use this guide to identify early warning signs.

Category	Safe Driving	At-Risk Driving
Cognitive	Alert, good decision-making	Memory loss, delayed decisions
Physical	Full mobility, quick reflexes	Limited movement, slowed reactions
Visual	Clear vision, good depth perception	Poor night vision, depth issues
Behavioral	Confident, calm driving	Anxiety, becoming lost
Driving Record	No recent accidents	New dents, minor accidents
Navigation	Comfortable in familiar areas	Confusion in familiar places
Response Time	Timely reactions	Missed signals, delayed responses

The Impact After Driving Stops

Area	Potential Outcome
Healthcare Access	Missed appointments
Social Engagement	Increased isolation
Mental Health	Higher risk of depression
Daily Living	Difficulty accessing essentials

Care Planning Considerations

- **Transportation alternatives**
- **Support for appointments & errands**
- **Monitoring for isolation or decline**

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