

How's your driving?

Safe Driving for Seniors



Staying safe, staying mobile



Staying mobile is important to the lifestyle of today's seniors. Growing older doesn't mean you have to give up driving. No one loses his or her driver's licence solely because of age.

As we get older, we change. And while the years following the age of 50 can be wonderful, some of us become hard of hearing, others need corrective lenses, and our reflexes may slow down.

Drivers should learn to recognize individual changes and adjust their driving habits accordingly. This brochure outlines some warning signs that could lead to unsafe driving and suggests steps that can be taken to keep you and other road users safe while you're behind the wheel.

Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America so it's important that every road user makes road safety a personal responsibility. If you're a senior driver, you may benefit from taking a driving course to help you stay on the road as long as you can.

How important is driving to me?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I experiencing an increasing number of near collisions?
- Have I been directly involved in minor collisions?
- Do I have difficulty driving through intersections, judging distance, or seeing pedestrians, road signs, or other vehicles?
- Do I have difficulty concentrating while driving?
- Do I get lost or disoriented on familiar roads?
- Do I have difficulty co-ordinating hand and foot movements?
- Am I experiencing vision problems, especially at night?
- Do I get nervous behind the wheel?
- Do other motorists frequently honk at me?
- Do family members express concern about my driving ability?

Consider taking a driver's course to refresh your knowledge of the rules of the road and safe driving practices.

Your answers to these questions can help you decide whether to continue to drive, cut back to certain times of the day or stop driving altogether. If you have checked one or more of the warning signs and are concerned about your driving ability, talk to your doctor or family and get their opinions.

Healthy living, safe driving

Your health is a key factor in your ability to drive.



- Your doctor can recommend an exercise program to improve flexibility and maintain strength, which can help you stay behind the wheel longer.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure any current and new medications will not negatively affect your ability to drive.
- Be careful with over-the-counter medications and combining medications that can also impair your driving.
- Report the following symptoms to your doctor:
 - ✓ vision changes, unexplained dizziness or fainting spells
 - ✓ frequent, chronic or severe pain
- Avoid driving if you're experiencing pain, because it can decrease your ability to concentrate and limit your movement behind the wheel.
- Have your hearing and eyesight checked regularly. Peripheral vision and depth perception tend to decline over the years.

Safe driving tips

- ✓ Plan your route.
- ✓ Always wear your seat belt.
- ✓ Drive during daylight hours if possible, especially if your vision at night is limited.
- ✓ Avoid driving in bad weather.
- ✓ Use familiar roads. Avoid heavily travelled roads and peak traffic periods if these conditions make you nervous.
- ✓ Stay alert. Be aware of pedestrians, bicycles and other vehicles that share the road and be ready for unexpected actions.
- ✓ Pay attention to traffic signals, and other vehicles when approaching intersections.
- ✓ Leave enough distance between you and the vehicle ahead that will allow you to stop quickly if needed.
- ✓ Stay in your lane.
- ✓ Avoid medications that make you drowsy, and don't drive when you're tired, ill or under stress.
- ✓ Use alternatives to driving such as, public transit, car/van pool, volunteer driver programs, friends or family who drive, taxi, or walking.



For drivers 80 plus

Ontario's **Senior Driver Licence Renewal Program** for drivers 80 years of age and older, helps seniors drive safely and be mobile and independent longer.

What happens to my driver's licence when I reach 80 years old?

Drivers aged 80 years or older must renew their driver's licence every two years. To renew your licence, you must pay the applicable licensing fee, complete a vision test, a written test on the rules of the road and signs, and take part in a group education session. Some participants may be required to take a road test.

What is the Group Education Session?

A Group Education Session is 90 minutes long. These sessions give you important information on driver safety. It will also give you the tools to help assess how well you drive, and identify areas where you may be able to improve your driving. It can help reduce the risk of being in a collision. You will be given information on:

- ✓ The effects of aging on driving
- ✓ Being aware of your own changes that can affect driving
- ✓ Ways to compensate for changes
- ✓ High-risk driving situations for seniors
- ✓ Ways to minimize the risks of a collision

Drivers 80 plus

When will I have to take a road test?

A trained counsellor reviews your driving record and your participation in the group education session. Only those who may pose a risk to road safety will need to take a road test.

What is on the written test?

There are multiple-choice questions on the rules of the road, driving situations and traffic signs. If you don't pass the test on the first try, it doesn't mean you lose your licence. You can try the test again to pass.

There is a sample written test on the MTO website at: www.mto.gov.on.ca that gives you an idea of the questions that will be asked.

You can prepare for the test by studying the latest version of the *The Official Driver's Handbook – Section 2 – Safe and Responsible Driving, and Section 3 – Traffic Signs and Lights*.

Driver's Handbooks can be purchased at any DriveTest Centre, Driver and Vehicle Licence Issuing Offices, or at bookstores and other retail outlets. The Driver's Handbook is also available on the MTO website.



Drivers 80 plus



How will I be notified about my licence renewal?

You will receive a renewal notice by mail up to 90 days before your driver's licence expires. Your notice will tell you the steps to take to renew your licence.

What if I will be out of the province when my licence comes up for renewal?

You can renew your driver's licence up to six months before it expires. If it cannot be arranged for you to attend the group education session or a road test before your licence expires, you may be issued a temporary driver's licence.

Do I take the tests and attend the group session at the same time?

You can complete all the requirements to renew your licence on the same day. It will take about three and half hours to complete. There are many locations across the province and you will be scheduled at a location closest to you.

Where do I make an appointment for the tests and group session?

When you receive your renewal application in the mail **you must** contact the MTO Regional Scheduling Office in your area to schedule an appointment. Please have your driver's licence number available when you call. The numbers to call are:

- Southwestern Ontario: 1-888-276-7885 or (519) 873-4276
- Central Ontario: 1-800-396-4233 or (416) 235-3579
- Eastern Ontario: 1-800-701-2171
- Northern Ontario: 1-800-461-9548 or (705) 497-5436

Where can I get more information on this program?

If you have questions about your driver's licence or to learn more about the Senior Drivers' Licence Renewal Program, call the Ministry of Transportation at 1-800-387-3445. In Toronto, call (416) 235-2999.

How do I get more information on driving safety?

Contact the Ministry of Transportation at 1-800-268-4686, or visit the website at www.mto.gov.on.ca then click on FAQ, then click on Senior Drivers.



Collision Involvement Programs



What happens if I am involved in a collision at my age?

The ministry has programs for drivers of all ages who were involved in a motor vehicle collision. These programs require drivers to pass road tests to keep their licence.

There is a specific collision program for older drivers.

If you are aged 70 or older and you were in a collision as a driver, and at the same time you were charged with a traffic offence and later convicted (for driving improperly), you will have to pass the 3-part driving test to keep your licence. This includes:

- Vision test
- Written test, and
- Road test (includes expressway).

A letter will be mailed to you informing you about what to do. You don't have to get tested until you receive the letter. The tests are free and you can take the tests again if you don't pass the first time.

Other information sources for seniors

- Canada Safety Council – (613) 739-1535
Website - www.safety-council.org
- CAA – Canadian Automobile Association – (613) 247-0117
Website – www.caa.ca

To find out if your area has special transportation services for seniors call:

- Seniors' INFOline – 1-888-910-1999
or in Toronto – 416-314-7511

To answer questions about your health concerns call:

- Telehealth Ontario – 1-866-797-0000 – a free government service, available 7 days-a-week, 24 hours-a-day

To find out how to be more active, request a free Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults from:

- Public Health Agency of Canada – (613) 941-3109
Website – www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/older/index.html