

Driving Fitness

Terri Cassidy, OTD, OTR/L, CDRS

Fitness to Drive

What was your first car?



“

The one thing that unites all human beings,
...is that, deep down inside, we ALL believe
that we are above average drivers.

”

- Dave Barry

Why Do We Drive?

Driving has been identified by older adults as the most valued daily living activity.

- Participating in religious or spiritual activities
- Participating in exercise
- Traveling to visit people
- Going out to eat



More Older Adults are on the Road Than Ever Before

- The U.S. population aged 70+ is growing rapidly.
- In 2023:
 - 40 million people over age 70 in the U.S.
 - **35 million licensed drivers over age 70**
 - The 70 and older population is projected to increase to 53 million in 2030

Older Drivers are a Bigger Share of the Driving Population

- 88% of Americans aged 70-84 hold a valid driver's license
- 69% of Americans aged 84 and above
- As the population ages the proportion of licensed drivers over the age of 70 continues to grow, with estimates that by the year 2030 between **20-25%** of all drivers will be over the age of 70.

How Can Aging Affect Driving?

Physical Health

- Vision
- Strength
- Flexibility
- Medications you are taking

Cognitive Health

- Memory
- Judgment
- Reaction time
- Reasoning

Fatality Rate per Thousand Licensed Drivers by Age Group



Source: NHTSA

Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled by Age Group



Source: NHTSA

5 Steps for Improving Driving Health

1

Be a Healthy Driver

2

Keep Learning

3

Make Smart Driving
Choices

4

Know your Vehicle

5

Get a Driving Check Up

Be a Healthy Driver

Get a physical every year

Medicare Wellness Visit

Things like diabetes, peripheral neuropathy, and depression can impact your driving

Driver Health Tip Sheet

Prioritizing Health and Safety as a CMV Driver

Being Aware of Your Health

Your physical health is a priority and directly impacts your ability to be a safe and effective CMV driver. Before getting behind the wheel, consider checking your:



Blood pressure

High blood pressure can cause harm by increasing the workload of the heart and blood vessels.

Lower your blood pressure through exercise, reducing salt, drinking less alcohol, and eating more potassium-rich foods.



Blood sugar

High blood sugar damages blood vessels over time, which can lead to an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and kidney and eye problems.

Maintain healthy blood sugar with cardio, light lifting, and hydration.



Cholesterol

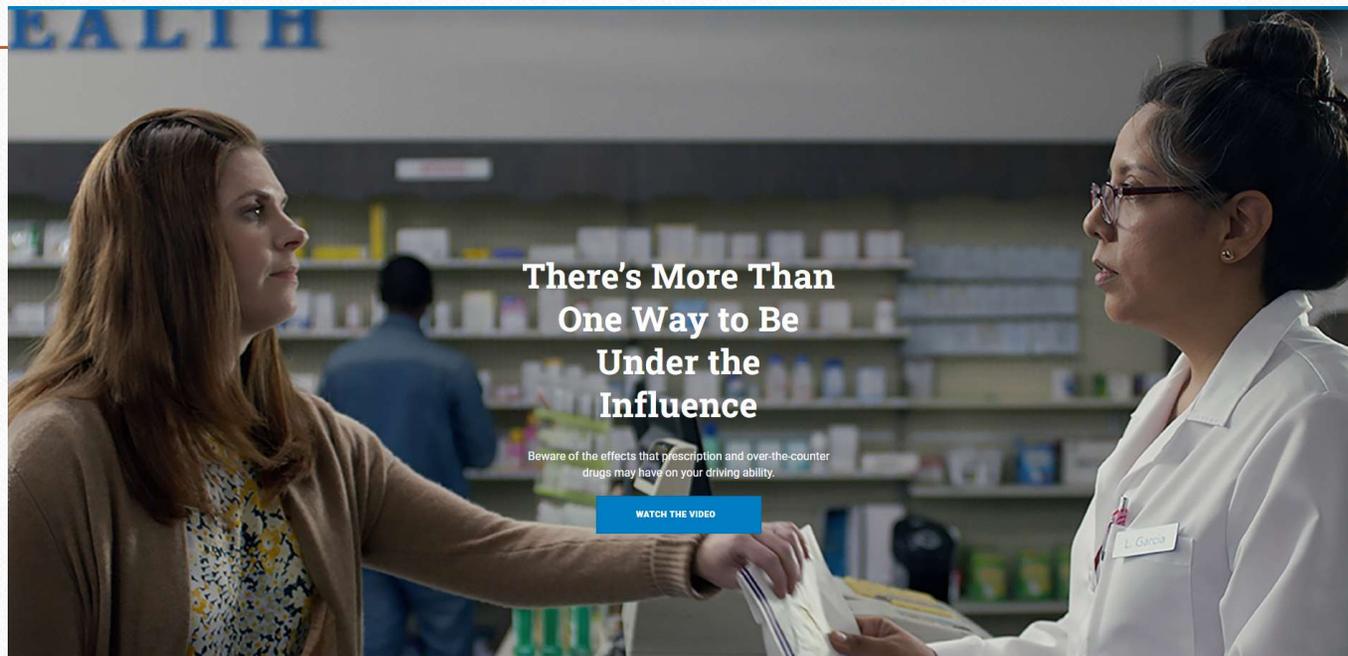
Cholesterol helps your body make hormones, vitamin D, and bile acids for food digestion. Too much cholesterol can accumulate in the artery walls causing them to tighten or cause a blockage.

Lower cholesterol levels with physical exercise and proper nutrition. Replace saturated fats with unsaturated fatty acids such as omega 3.



**OUR
PLAN**
To Share The
Road Safely

Be a Healthy Driver - Medications



**There's More Than
One Way to Be
Under the
Influence**

Beware of the effects that prescription and over-the-counter drugs may have on your driving ability.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

Be a Healthy Driver - Vision

- Visual Acuity
- Contrast Sensitivity
- Depth Perception
- Visual Fields

Did you know that 90% of the information needed to drive safely comes through our eyes? Strong vision keeps you, your passengers, and others on the road safe.



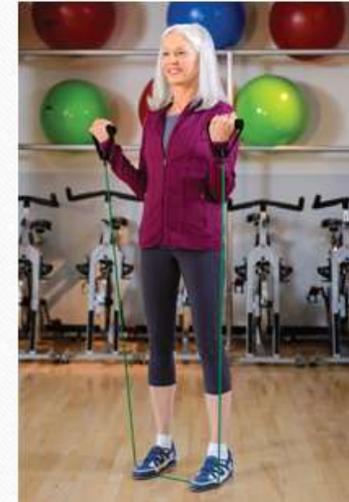
Be a Healthy Driver - Vision

- **Glaucoma**, a disease that damages your eye's optic nerve. Often, there are no warning signs or obvious symptoms in the early stages. As the disease progresses, blind spots develop in your peripheral vision, or, less commonly, in your central vision.
- **Diabetic retinopathy**, a disease in which high blood sugar levels cause damage to blood vessels in the retina, stealing both central and peripheral vision.
- **Cataract**, a progressive clouding of the natural lens inside the eye that causes blurry vision, glare and halos around lights. Cataracts can also make it harder to see well at night, in bad weather or in low light conditions. And they can gradually diminish color vision.
- **Macular degeneration**, a disease in which a part of the retina called the macula becomes damaged and causes loss of central vision.

Be a Healthy Driver - Exercise

Drivers in the MIT Age Lab study who were asked to exercise daily:

- Reported greater ease in turning their heads to see blind spots when changing lanes or to back up;
- Were able to rotate their bodies further to scan the driving environment while making right hand turns;
- Were able to get into their cars more rapidly, demonstrating increased overall flexibility.



Center for
Mature Market
EXCELLENCE®



EXERCISE FOR MATURE DRIVERS

PREVENT FALLS → AVOID CRASHES

Older drivers with a history of falling are

40% more likely to be involved in a crash than their peers.



12 million older adults will experience a fall this year and over **400,000** will be involved in a crash.

Reasons older adults might experience a fall:

- Lower body weakness
- Poor balance
- Slow reaction time
- Taking certain medications
- Vision problems



Low impact fitness training programs and driving improvement courses can help:

- Enhance balance
- Strengthen muscles
- Promote flexibility
- Keep older drivers safe and on the road longer

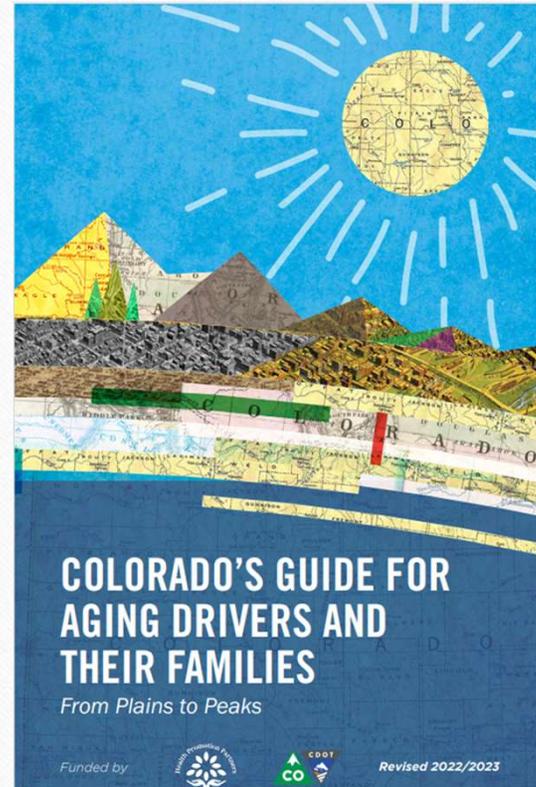
www.AAA.com/Fitness
Helping Seniors Drive Safer & Longer



References: NHTSA General Estimates System (GES) data, analyzed by AAA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Keep Learning



Keep Learning – Road Rules

Driving Through Multi-Lane Roundabouts

Choose your lane as you approach the roundabout just like a regular intersection:



TO TURN RIGHT OR CONTINUE STRAIGHT AHEAD ON THE ROAD

Get in the right lane and plan to use the right lane of the roundabout.

TO TURN LEFT OR CONTINUE STRAIGHT AHEAD

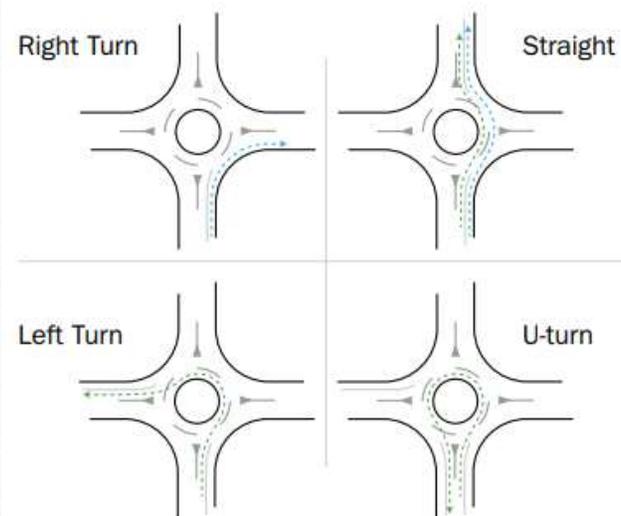
Get in the left lane and use the left lane of the roundabout.

TO MAKE A U-TURN

Plan to use the left lane in the roundabout.

At the yield line and yield sign you see just before entering the roundabout, you must **YIELD TO TRAFFIC IN BOTH LANES** of the roundabout because you need to choose which lane to enter.

Remember, you can take it slow.



Keep Learning - Courses

A Road Wise Driver Course

<https://www.aadriverprogram.com/colorado/>



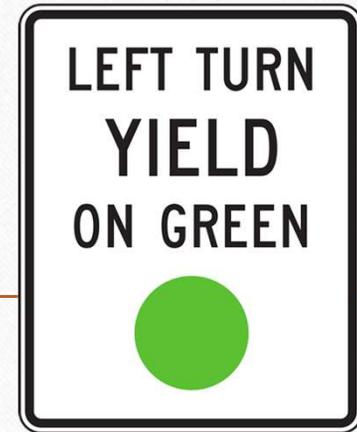
AARP Smart Driver Course

<https://www.aarpdriversafety.org/defensive-driving-course.html>



Make Smart Driving Choices

- Where and when you drive
- Consider the weather
- Limit specific driving situations
 - Left turns at intersections
 - Changing lanes
 - Parking lots



Know your Vehicle



Know your Vehicle - CarFit



Know your Vehicle – Safety Features



- Seat Belts
- Airbags
- Passenger-side mirror
- Technology



Get a Driving Check Up



YOUR ROAD AHEAD



You can
benefit from
an OT
Driving
Evaluation
if...

- If you feel your driving is fine
- If you are “feeling your age”
- If you have one or more medical conditions
- If you have suffered a loss of peripheral vision, depth perception, or other vision related change
- If you have been told that you should stop driving, but you’re not sure that you agree
- If you would like to resume driving after a period of non-driving
- If you have been diagnosed with cognitive impairment or dementia

Medical fitness to drive evaluation

Clinical evaluation

- Visual function
- Visual motor speed
- Motor and sensory assessment
- Brake reaction time
- Diagnosis specific assessments
 - Dementia screening
 - Visual field screening



Medical fitness to drive evaluation

Behind the wheel evaluation

- Driver evaluation vehicle with instructor brake
- Start in a low challenge environment
- Increase demands to include the use of executive function skills
 - i.e. Find and pull into a gas station
 - i.e. Drive me to a familiar location from here



Medical fitness to drive evaluation

Consultation after the evaluation

- Results are discussed with client and family
- Detailed report
 - Fit to return to driving
 - Unfit to return to driving
 - Return to driving with restrictions
- Report is sent to referring physician or optometrist
- Training or re-eval as needed



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Questions?

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