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## **Virginia GrandDriver Program**

In Virginia, 65 is a speed limit, not an age limit. [Virginia GrandDriver](#) is a public education campaign designed to help seniors stay safe and mobile as they age. It is a source of information for seniors and for those who care about them. [GrandDriver](#), a program of [The Office for Aging Services of the Division for Community Living](#), is sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and administered by the [Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles](#).

The information provided through the GrandDriver program:

- Gives older Virginians and their families/caregivers suggestions to improve driving skills and provides resources that will help older drivers compensate for age-related changes so they can stay on the road as safely as possible, for as long as possible.
- Encourages seniors to plan ahead for safe mobility before their later years.
- Offers suggestions for alternative forms of transportation to help older Virginians maintain their mobility and independence.

### **What can seniors do to drive more safely and remain mobile as they age?**

As we age, we can all expect to experience changes in our vision, our hearing, and our ability to judge distances, to process information and to react quickly. At some point in our lives, these changes will affect our ability to drive a vehicle. There may even be a time when we stop driving altogether. Before that day comes, if it does, there are steps we can take to remain as safe and mobile as possible.

We all need to develop the following safe driving habits:

- Do you need glasses or contacts to drive? Wear them every time you drive.
- Don't drive tired.
- Don't wear sunglasses in dim or dark conditions.
- Don't drink and drive. Are you taking any medications?

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if your medications or supplements affect your driving ability.
- Always wear your safety belt.

## **Recognizing the Signs**

It may not be obvious to an older adult or concerned friend or family member that a driver's physical capacity has changed. Some of the signs that an older driver needs assistance are that he or she:

- Neglects to buckle up
- Has difficulty working the pedals
- Has difficulty merging on freeways or turning onto busy streets
- Has trouble seeing other vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians, especially at night
- Ignores or "misses" stop signs and other traffic signals
- Reacts slowly to sirens and flashing lights of emergency vehicles
- Weaves, straddles lanes, drifts into other lanes or changes lanes without signaling
- Gets lost or disoriented easily, even in familiar places.
- Two or more traffic tickets, warnings, collisions or "near misses" in the past two years may signal a problem.

One way to determine if you or someone you care about could benefit from safe driving instruction is by taking the GrandDriver website quiz. Access it on the GrandDriver web page.

## **How Aging Affects Driving**

Driving is a complex, fast-paced activity. A typical driver makes 20 decisions per mile, with less than half a second to act to avoid a collision. Age can affect a driver's ability to sense, decide and act. Knowing that natural changes come with age will allow older drivers to take actions that will make them safer drivers longer.

At any age, we need to ask ourselves this question: Am I a safe driver? After all, most of us want to make a responsible choice to protect others and ourselves when we drive. If you are unsure of your performance, discuss the issue with a trusted friend or family member.

If you or someone you care about has experienced, or can answer 'yes' to the following, then follow-up may be needed to ensure safe driving.

- Suffered a stroke, heart attack or diminished eyesight?
- Experienced difficulty in negotiating sharp turns and intersections?
- Hesitated over right-of-way decisions or situations you once took for granted?
- Been surprised by the sudden presence of other vehicles or pedestrians?
- Received negative feedback from other drivers?
- Become lost on familiar routes?
- Felt nervous or exhausted after driving?
- Been cited for traffic violations or found at fault in crashes?

### **Medication Alert**

Older Americans consume more medications and have more chronic conditions than any other portion of the population. Risk for medication side effects and interactions increases with the number of medications taken each day. Talk to your medical professional about any side effects your medication may have, and if it may affect your ability to drive. Common drugs that affect driving include:

- Benzodiazepines for anxiety or insomnia
- Insulin for diabetes
- Antispasmodics for ulcers
- Pain medicines and some anti-inflammatories
- Some high blood pressure medications and diuretics
- Antibiotics for infections
- Antihistamines for allergies
- Cardiac glycosides for congestive heart failure
- Antidepressants

### **Tips for Senior Drivers and Their Families**

- Check your vision and hearing on a regular basis.
- Take a driving refresher course for older drivers.
- Avoid driving in bad weather and when visibility is limited. Drive only during daylight hours if necessary.
- Plan your route ahead of time. Travel on roads you know. Make a trial run on those you don't.

- Explore alternatives to driving before the need ever arises. If you do have to stop or significantly limit your driving, you'll be prepared with bus schedules, car pool groups and public transportation options.
- Limit left hand turns to avoid crossing traffic lanes or make left turns only at controlled intersections with left turn arrows.
- Check your mirrors, headrests and seat position every time you get behind the wheel and before starting out on your journey.
- Stay in the right lane if you can.
- Avoid busy highways and busy times of the day when traffic is heavy.
- Keep your vehicle in good working order at all times.

### **What other forms of transportation are available for those who should limit their driving?**

The [GrandDriver](#) website has a comprehensive listing of transportation services state-wide on its web page. In addition, you can do a [Search on SeniorNavigator](#) for "transportation" or "rides" in your zip code or county.

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**GrandDriver** is an educational resource designed to provide Virginians with information and resources about staying safe and mobile on the road as they age. GrandDriver is an initiative of the [Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services](#), and is funded by the [Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles](#).

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