

Medical Conditions That Affect Driving

Medical conditions, medications and personal habits affect driving safety. Here are some medical conditions and types of medications that can affect driving skills.



- Acute myocardial infarction
 - Acute stroke
 - Angina
 - Chronic renal failure
 - Dementia or delirium from any cause
 - Dizziness
 - Falls
 - Fainting
 - Hypoglycemic attack
 - HIV
 - Mini strokes (Transient ischemic attacks)
 - Seizures
 - Sleep attacks or cataplexy
 - Surgery
 - Traumatic brain injury
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- Diseases affecting vision including cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, field cuts, and low visual acuity even after correction.
 - Cardiovascular disease especially when associated with pre-syncope, syncope or cognitive deficits, including unstable coronary syndrome, arrhythmias, congestive heart failure, hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, and valvular disease.
 - Metabolic disease including Type I and Type II diabetes mellitus and hypothyroidism
 - Musculoskeletal disabilities including arthritis, back pain, bursitis, foot abnormalities, osteoporosis, etc.
 - Neurologic disease including dementia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, peripheral neuropathy, and residual deficits from stroke, seizure disorders
 - Psychiatric disease including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, psychotic illness, personality disorders, and alcohol or other substance abuse
 - Respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and obstructive sleep apnea, etc.

Medications

Many non-prescription and prescription medications, either alone or in combination with other drugs, have the potential to impair driving ability. Medications with strong potential to affect driving performance include:

- Anti cholinergics
- Anti convulsants
- Anti depressants
- Anti emetics
- Anti histamines
- Anti hypertensives
- Anti parkinsonians
- Anti psychotics
- Benzodiazepenes and other
- Muscle relaxants
- Narcotic analgesics
- Sedatives/anxiolytics
- Stimulants

Medical Conditions or Personal Habits

Small body size including short legs and short arms can seriously affect safe driving. Stature can limit the ability to reach the accelerator, brakes and dimmer switches. It can affect the ability to see out of the windows, or to see at least 3" above the steering wheel, or see at least 10' in front of the car hood. Short arms challenge the ability to easily reach controls. *(These problematic conditions can be controlled by choosing a vehicle that fits the driver, or using special assistive devices to support safe driving. Such devices include cushions to elevate the driver's height or bring the body closer to the steering wheel and other controls; pedal extension devices, and many other products available to support function and abilities. Dr. Vanessa)*

Driving habits such as driving when angry or emotionally upset or while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or chemicals; failure to wear seat belts, follow speed limits, or follow the rules of the road will also negatively affect driving safety.

Internet Resource used for this article:

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/433/chapter2.pdf>