



Older Driver Screening and Assessment

Aging drivers experience age related changes which can affect driving safety. However, age should never be the sole predictor of the fitness to drive. Many factors determine driving fitness, but it helps to be able to recognize factors that could increase safety risks, so that early preventive action can be taken to delay loss of independence.

Skills and Abilities Necessary to Drive

- Vision and perception
- Hearing
- Cognitive skills such as concentration, attention span, decision making, short and long term memory, etc.
- Coordination
- Muscle and joint movement
- Strength and endurance
- Balance
- Ability to adapt to change
- Speed of reaction time
- Flexibility, etc.

Aging Can Affect Vital Driving Skills

Normal age related changes can affect vital driving skills. Aging does cause changes in

- Vision
- Cognitive skills
- Muscle strength
- Flexibility
- Range of motion

Early recognition of at- risk behaviors can save lives and improve health and ability. It can delay the premature loss of independence and self control.

SAFE Aging Driver Screening Program

SAFE Aging works with individuals and families to promote independence and safety in the home and in the community.

SAFE AGING can help with the following:

- Help older drivers and their families recognize changing abilities due to aging
- Help older drivers to choose or develop healthy actions to make driving safer and easier
- Identify useful assistive devices to make driving easier, safer or more comfortable
- Refer to supportive services as needed

Driver Safety Screening and Assessment Program

1. Completion of the Safety Appraisal For Elders ([SAFESM](#)) at home
2. Clinical Interview
3. Assessment including
 - a. medical, social and driving history
 - b. family interview
 - c. clinical interview and review of health risk assessment results,
 - d. medications review
 - e. drivers skills clinical assessment includes a variety of activities to determine abilities in the three key functions of safe driving (vision, cognition and motor function)
 - f. educational and training activities

USING THE SAFESM in Driving Safety Program

Dr. Dazio developed a self appraisal activity for older adults called the Safety Appraisal For Elders (SAFESM) to highlight potential risk factors and hazards that have an influence on health and safety. The [SAFESM](#) addresses factors that influence health, safety, and basic and instrumental daily life activities. Driving is an instrumental activity of daily living.

Experts participating in the Older Driver Consensus Conference (American Occupational Therapy Association and the U. S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2002) advised older drivers should be **informed consumers before** they encounter a need for professional care.

In 2002, the AASHTO noted "there is a need to help aging individuals recognize their changing abilities and adapt their driving practices,..." SAFE Aging's proprietary self risk appraisal, the Safety Appraisal For Elders ([SAFESM](#)), is an innovative activity for aging drivers.

The [SAFESM](#) is a useful self appraisal activity for older adults that can be used for early recognition of potential driving safety risk factors. The Safety Appraisal For Elders ([SAFESM](#)) is an interesting, simple, cost effective self appraisal activity that can identify changes in factors that affect driving skill. Identified risk factors can indicate the need for medical assessment or further attention.

The National Cooperative Highway Safety Research Program in 2002 found that declining functions resulting from aging can be observed in a variety of ways:

- Vision impairment
- Cognitive changes
- Reductions in strength
- Reductions in flexibility and
- Reductions in range of motion

The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO, 2002) noted motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of injury related deaths among 65-74 year olds and are the second leading cause (after falls) among 75-84 year olds! These are very sobering statistics.

Research indicates crash rates increase due to:

- vision
- hearing
- mobility
- degenerative processes that can effect abilities and function
- cognitive functions
- reaction times
- side effects of medications

FAQ's

What are some examples of red flags for medically impaired driving?

- parking inappropriately
- hitting or driving over curbs
- getting lost in familiar places
- drifting across lanes
- getting confused at exits
- stopping before intersections
- scrapes on car, garage, or mailbox
- car accidents or near misses
- needing instructions from passengers
- poor or slow decision making in traffic
- not anticipating actions of other drivers
- failing to observe and obey traffic signs and speed limits
- anger, confusion or frustration while driving
- trouble navigating turns or judging distance

[Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles: Vision Requirements](#)

[Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles: Report of Eye Exam](#)

[Application for Disabled Person Parking Permit](#)

[The Effects of Aging on Driving Ability](#)

[References](#)