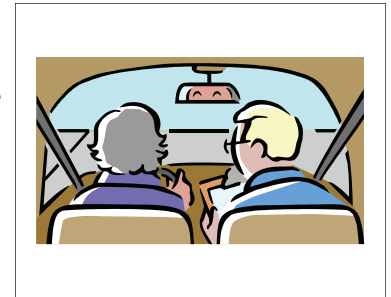


DRIVER SAFETY

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>What Does It Take To Drive Safely?</i>	1
<i>Driving Under the Influence</i>	2
<i>Conditions, Habits, and Medications That Affect SAFE Driving</i>	3
<i>The Secret to SAFE Driving: Health and Fitness!</i>	3
<i>Tips to Prolong SAFE Driving</i>	4
<i>Did You Know?</i>	4
<i>Ask Dr. Vanessa</i>	5
<i>Elder Volunteers Needed</i>	5
<i>Warning: Be Your Best Advocate!</i>	6

Hello, Readers! SAFE Aging's February newsletter is about driver safety. This month, we discuss the skills needed to drive safely; how normal aging affects driving; conditions and medications that affect driving. We feature an article called "Driving Under the Influence" written by attorney Wayne K. Ekren. Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio offers practical suggestions to prolong safe driving skills; tips for families and friends of potentially at-risk drivers. Dr. Vanessa answers a timely question about driver's licenses and arbitrary age limits. We hope you enjoy this newsletter. Have a safe and healthy February.



What Does It Take To Drive Safely?

By Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio

In a draft report prepared for the International Council of Ophthalmology for the 30th World Ophthalmology Congress (February, 2006) the authors stated, "...driving safety does not depend so much on what is seen, but rather on how quickly and how adequately drivers respond to what is seen."

A driver has to simultaneously observe, steer, control the car, manage speed while traffic, environmental conditions, the physical road environment, and the rules of the road continually change. Vehicle design, the vehicle's fit with the driver, ease of use of the vehicle and good driving habits are additional factors affecting driving skills and abilities. All of these factors are dependent on the driver's physical and cognitive abilities. The following information provides a basic framework to explain just what it takes to drive safely. [Read more.](#)



Safety, Health, Injury Prevention



Driving Under The Influence

By Wayne K. Ekren, Esquire

You have a nasty cold and just took the last of the cough medicine. You feel awful but only have to drive three blocks to the drug store to buy more cough medicine, and return home to crawl back into your warm bed. You get into your car, fasten your seat belt, adjust your mirrors and away you go.



Blue flashing lights appear in your rear view mirror! Oh, no! You check your speed. You **are** driving the speed limit. Why are you being stopped by the police? The officer approaches your car and tells you to get out and take a field sobriety test. You have not been drinking. You are outraged, and refuse the test. The officer again orders you out of your car and demands a breath test. Again you can not believe he is ordering **you** to take such a test. You refuse. What happens next? Your driver's license is automatically taken from you. Your car is on its way to the impound lot. You are on your way to jail. Welcome to DUI (driving under the influence)!

In this case, the police officer observed "reckless" or abnormal driving, which immediately gave him or her probable cause to submit the driver to sobriety tests. The driver refused, giving the police officer the authority to immediately take the driver's license, impound the vehicle, and take the driver to jail.

Most people think that DUI only relates to drinking alcoholic beverages and driving an automobile. That is wrong. Most states in the United States have definitions of DUI that include any vehicle being operated, such as a car, boat, motorcycle, and even a bicycle in some municipalities, and describe DUI as a person under the influence if:

- the blood alcohol level is 0.08 or more grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood, or has a breath-alcohol level of 0.08 or more grams of alcohol per 210 liters of breath, (depending on your weight that could be one drink) or
- if any chemical substance that is inhaled or ingested induces a condition of intoxication or which distorts or disturbs the auditory, visual, or mental processes, or
- if taking any controlled substance authorized by law and physician that affects the individual to the extent that the person's normal faculties are impaired.

[Read more](#)

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Conditions, Habits and Medications That Affect SAFE Driving

There are many things that can negatively affect driving. For instance, arthritis conditions can restrict physical flexibility. Joint stiffness caused by arthritis can reduce range of motion of the neck, arms/hands, hips, legs/feet. This physical restriction causes loss of range of motion (ROM). Loss of ROM will change large motion and fine motion coordination, which will affect speed of response when driving a vehicle.

A stiff neck can limit the ability to visually scan the full visual field needed to view and observe surrounding traffic conditions. This skill is vital for safe defensive driving. Painful hands will affect the ability to hold or steer the wheel, grasp or operate driving controls. For lower body joint difficulties, stiffness might affect the ability to quickly move the foot from the accelerator to the brake, a life saving driving skill!

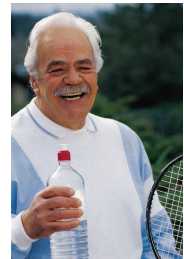
[Medical Conditions That Affect Driving](#)

ACCIDENTS ARE PREVENTABLE!
Early preventive action can protect your lifestyle, delay aging, prolong your safe driving years, and potentially save your life!

The Secret to SAFE Driving: Health and Fitness!

The secret to safe driving is to stay healthy, physically and mentally fit and use good driving habits! It is that simple!

Functional vision is the most important of all driving abilities; however, the body must be flexible. Joints and muscles have to be able to work in an unrestricted manner. When this occurs, full range of motion will be available for all actions needed to drive a car. Healthy muscles and joints suggest sitting and standing balance will be good. Speed of reaction should be good. Physical fitness assures the physical response will also be rapid. Mental fitness assures the best ability to make rapid high level executive decisions with good judgment. Good driving habits such as always wearing seat belts, driving in good weather and traffic conditions or without distractions are also necessary for skilled and safe driving.



Tips to Prolong SAFE Driving

by Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio

There are many things we can do throughout our lifetime to prolong safe driving skills.



- Participation in fitness programs to maintain or develop sitting and standing balance, coordination, strength, endurance, energy, flexibility and range of motion is essential for safe driving. These personal skills maximize driving abilities.
- Choose good eating habits with nutritious foods: Eat healthy and nutritious foods and drink plenty of water to keep the body fit and energized.
- We can be mentally active by continually working to develop cognitive skills and abilities, such as playing word games, doing puzzles, learning new things, reading, etc.
- We can monitor personal health and abilities, and take early preventive actions to reduce declines in abilities or ill health.
- Have eyes examined annually if over aged 65.
- Be aware of prescription drug complications and interactions.

Read [Driving Tips](#)

Information & Resources



[Check Out Our Learning Center](#)
for more
information on
health, safety, and
injury prevention!

Did You Know?

- Since the first documented crash death in 1899, more than 30 million people worldwide have died in traffic crashes. (iii.org)
- In 2004, 42,636 people died in motor vehicle crashes and an additional 2,788,000 people were injured. The economic impact of these crashes was \$230.6 billion (iii.org)
- Each year, alcohol-related crashes in the United States cost about \$51 billion (Blincoe et al. 2002).



Ask Dr Vanessa

What do you think about setting arbitrary age limits for drivers?



For many people, driving "makes doing possible". Losing the right to drive restricts mobility. It can reduce access to friends, social activities, community events, churches and medical care. This in turn can cause social isolation, sadness, depression and ill health. Losing a drivers license, in a mobile society such as ours, reduces independence and quality of life. It has serious life changing effects, and should not be done without careful and studied consideration of function and abilities.

While there is no doubt we all age, we age differently and at different rates. Therefore, in my mind, I believe having the privilege to drive should be based on functional skills and abilities, not on age. Therefore, I am very opposed to setting "arbitrary" age limits for drivers. What do you think?

<http://www.icoph.org/standards/driving.html>



We are seeking people aged 65 or over who are living independently in the community to participate in an elder health study. If you would like to participate or have friends or family members that might be interested, please contact our toll free number at 1-866-SAFE AGE. For more information, refer to this [poster](#).

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Safety, Health, Injury Prevention

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WARNING: Be Your Best Advocate

A very dear friend of mine had surgery earlier in the week. Six days later she woke up feeling odd, then sick, then dizzy. She needed help to walk a very short distance to her bed, then began losing blood and passed out. Luckily, her daughter was there to call 911. She lost a tremendous amount of blood, and was admitted to the hospital.

This event happened because her orthopedic doctor and her cardiologist failed to communicate with each other about her regimen of prescribed medications. prior to scheduling surgery, The end result was emergency hospitalization, and terrified patient, family and friends.

The problem with this scenario was caused by incorrect combination and dosages of medications, that essentially should not have been prescribed prior to, during and after surgery. The physicians failure to communicate with each other could have led to her untimely death! This was an unnecessary and un-excusable life threatening event

I relay this story as a warning to all. Be your best advocate! Always communicate with your doctors about all prescribed medications and over the counter products. Make sure **ALL** doctors are informed about any medications at all times, and especially prior to and after surgery. Do not assume your doctors have all vital information. Keep an up to date [record of your current medications](#), and take that to all doctor visits as a tool to help you rapidly communicate with them.

Internet Resources for this Newsletter

<http://www.iii.org/media/hottopics/insurance/test5/>

This is a brochure to help you learn how to buy a safer car.

<http://www.safercar.gov/BASC2006/index.htm>

For more information about driver safety, refer to our [February, 2005 newsletter](#)