

# When to turn over the car keys - Driving Ability & Age

As you age, driving can become more difficult. **Understanding how age can affect your driving ability is the first step in knowing when it may be best to give up your driving privileges.**

A few of the mental and physical changes that may **hurt your ability** to operate a motor vehicle safely include:

- **Your vision.**

- As you age you won't be able to see as great of a distance, which can affect your reaction time.

- **Hearing difficulty.**

- The ability to recognize sirens, horns, and other warnings is important in order to stay safe and obey the law.

- **Slower reflexes.**

- The ability to quickly react to hazards will diminish.
- Finding streets or reacting to stopped vehicles will be more challenging, increasing your chances of collision.

- **Joint pain.**

- Pain in the neck can make it difficult to look in side mirrors or check your blind spot when changing lanes.
- Knee pain may affect your ability to reach the gas and brake pedals. ◦

Shoulder problems can make steering and shifting more difficult. • **Reduced coordination.**

- This will make it harder to maintain control of your vehicle. •

- **Mental changes.**

- The ability to divide your attention as you try to multi-task on the road will be harder because of slight changes in the brain.
- This will make locating road signs, pedestrians, traffic signals, and other vehicles more of a challenge.

- **Other health conditions.**

- Parkinson's disease, dementia, and other illnesses may make it impossible to operate a vehicle safely.
  - Speak with your doctor if you have a condition that may affect your ability to operate a motor vehicle.

In addition to these **mental and physical changes**, also be aware that taking **prescribed medications** can affect your ability to drive, too.

Read your **medication labels** carefully and **consult with your doctor** or pharmacist to see if your prescriptions allow for safe **operation of heavy machinery**.

## Warning Signs

As your mental and physical health declines, it's important to remember that staying safe on the road is the number one priority.

Some of the **warning signs** showing your ability to drive safely is **beginning to decline** include:

- Difficulty **changing lanes**.
- Suddenly **drifting** into other lanes.
- Problems **judging distance** when braking.
- Forgetting to use **turn signals**.

A few of the more **severe "red flags"** which may indicate that you can **no longer operate a vehicle safely** include:

- **Multiple incidents** when an accident was close to occurring. •
- **New dents** or scratches on the car.
- **Missing stop signs** or red lights.
- **Collisions with non-moving objects**, such as:
  - Fences.
  - Mailboxes.
  - Garage doors.
  - Curbs.
- **Collisions with other vehicles**.
- An increase in **traffic violations**.
- Becoming lost frequently or **difficulty navigating**.
- Several incidents of **road rage**.

\* Resource from DMV.org