DRIVING IS A PHYSICAL EXERCISE WHICH REQUIRES A CERTAIN LEVEL OF STRENGTH, FLEXIBILITY AND COORDINATION TO DO SAFELY. AS WE AGE, SOME DECLINE IN OUR PHYSICAL FITNESS IS INEVITABLE. HOWEVER, STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT EXERCISE CAN ACTUALLY SLOW DOWN THE AGING PROCESS. FLEXIBILITY FITNESS TRAINING CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN IMPROVING RANGE OF MOTION AND INCREASING LEVELS OF FLEXIBILITY AMONG OLDER DRIVERS, RESULTING IN BETTER DRIVING SKILLS.

The following exercises are designed to improve flexibility as it relates to driving. As with any new exercise program, you should consult your physician before attempting them. Keep in mind that flexibility varies from person to person—only stretch as far as is comfortable for you, and always stop if you feel pain or become dizzy or lightheaded. When beginning these exercises, move slowly and avoid jerky movements.

Exercise and physical activity are essentially a “tune-up” for our heart, muscles and joints. An effective exercise program should do these things: challenge you, change you, and free your joints to move your entire body, including your trunk, arms, legs and lungs aerobically, stretch and strengthen your muscles, and loosen your joints to make them flexible. Flexibility permits drivers to move their entire body, including their joints, more freely in order to observe the road from all angles and eliminate traffic blind spots.

FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

1. From a sitting position, slowly rotate your trunk, from waist up, to the left. Try to keep hips in place, facing forward.
2. Return to the forward position.
3. Repeat move to the right.

2. Return to the forward position.
2. Tilt head backward until forehead is parallel to the ceiling.

CHIN FLEXION-EXTENSION:

TRUNK ROTATION:

NECK ROTATION:

NECK ROTATION:

CHIN FLEXION-EXTENSION:

TRUNK ROTATION:

NECK ROTATION:

For more exercises, visit the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety web site at www.seniordrivers.org or call 1-800-993-7222 to request a brochure.

www.michigan.gov/msp

Michigan State Police:

Secretary of State (Driver Improvement Hearings):

Traffic Improvement Association:

Local Hospital Occupational Therapy Unit

Contact your local hospital occupational therapy unit to see if they offer a driving program geared toward the older driver. Many have one in place.

Driver Rehabilitation and Evaluation Centers

To locate a driver evaluation and rehabilitation center near you, contact the Association of Driver Educators for the Disabled at 1-800-305-3444 or www.aded.net.

Local Hospital Occupational Therapy Unit

Contact your local hospital occupational therapy unit to see if they offer a driving program geared toward the older driver. Many have one in place.

Driver Rehabilitation Centers

• Contact the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) for information on their “55 Alive Mentor Driver Program.” 888-227-7669

• Contact you local AAA office for information on their “Safe Driving for Mature Operators Program.”

• Contact the National Safety Council for information on their “Crashing the Mentor Driver Program” 1-800-621-6244

Self Assessment Guides

• “The Older Driver Self-Assessment and Resource Guide: Creating Mobility Choices.” To request a single copy, write to:

AARP Fulfillment

601 E Street NW

Washington, DC 20049

(Ask for document number D4973)


SOME USEFUL WEB SITES

How’s My Driving?

SIMPLE TIPS FOR MAINTAINING DRIVING SKILLS

Driving is a physical exercise which requires a certain level of strength, flexibility and coordination to do safely. As we age, some decline in our physical fitness is inevitable. However, studies have shown that exercise can actually slow down the aging process.

Flexibility fitness training can be an effective tool in improving range of motion and increasing levels of fitness among older drivers, resulting in better driving skills.

FIT PEOPLE MAKE BETTER DRIVERS

Helpful Resources:

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Helpful Resources:
Making safe decisions behind the wheel relies heavily on our eyesight. Approximately 90% of the decisions we make while driving are based on information acquired through the eyes. But as we age, our eyesight begins to deteriorate and becomes progressively worse.

The amount of light we need to drive safely doubles every 15 years. To put this into perspective, a 60 year old requires 10 times as much light as a 18 year old to drive, and will take twice as long to adjust to changes in light and darkness.

Our ability to focus quickly from near to far also declines. An example of this would be looking up from the speedometer to the road ahead. Younger drivers need only about 0.25 seconds to make the transition, whereas drivers over 40 may take twice as long as a younger driver to observe the brake lights of the vehicle in front of them.

In addition, colored typically will become harder to see. An older driver may take twice as long as a younger driver to observe the brake lights of the vehicle as front of them.

Other changes concern also affect our driving ability. Our peripheral vision narrows, our depth-perception diminishes, and we may develop cataracts, glaucoma or macular degeneration. In truth perception is crucial in judging how fast other cars are coming and approaching and we may develop large blind spots. The amount of time on the roadway has notably increased, and it may cause us to become confused, angry or even hasty in our driving abilities.

At some point, it is important that we not put our trust in signs on our own driving.

Research has shown that, even though we travel more miles per year, older drivers are more prone to being seriously injured or killed in an accident. Based on the estimated annual miles traveled, the fatality rate for drivers 65 and older is an astounding 17 times higher than the rate for drivers 25 to 64 years old.

As we grow older, our bodies react less quickly in certain situations. Our vision becomes darker to be able to see better and our fine motor skills may also decline. We begin to process things more slowly, and the world appears to be moving at a much faster pace. The amount of care on the roadway has notably increased, and it may cause us to become confused, angry or even hasty in our driving abilities. At this point, it is important that we are not put to rest without putting our own driving.

Do you need to change your driving habits? Take this self-assessment test to find out!

Do other drivers honk or pass you frequently, even when traffic is moving relatively slowly? Yes No

Do you become nervous or anxious when approaching intersections? Yes No

Have you found yourself in multiple close calls and near-accidents on the road? Yes No

Do you make your turns at a location and not remember how you got there? Yes No

Have you driven your family and friendsunctuation negatively on your driving habits? Yes (No)

Am I physically in shape to drive? Yes No

Am I required to take medication that conflicts with my ability to drive in a safe manner? Yes No

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, there could be time to recognize that your fine motor skills may be declining. Based on your “yes” answers, ask yourself:

Are there ways I can improve on my driving habits? Yes No

Should I consider public transportation or an automobile means of transportation? Yes No

Am I physically in shape to drive? Yes No

If the answers to these questions indicate a need for change, there is help available. See the book panel of this informational guide for helpful resources.

Do you notice more dents and dings in your vehicle and do not know how they got there? Yes (No)

If your answers “yes” to any of these questions, then it would be time to recognize that your fine motor skills may be declining. Based on your “yes” answers, ask yourself:

Are there ways I can improve on my driving habits? Yes No

Should I consider public transportation or an automobile means of transportation? Yes No

Am I physically in shape to drive? Yes No

If the answers to these questions indicate a need for change, there is help available. See the book panel of this informational guide for helpful resources.

If you notice more dents and dings in your vehicle and do not know how they got there? Yes (No)

If your answers “yes” to any of these questions, then it would be time to recognize that your fine motor skills may be declining. Based on your “yes” answers, ask yourself:

Are there ways I can improve on my driving habits? Yes No

Should I consider public transportation or an automobile means of transportation? Yes No

Am I physically in shape to drive? Yes No

If the answers to these questions indicate a need for change, there is help available. See the book panel of this informational guide for helpful resources.

If you notice more dents and dings in your vehicle and do not know how they got there? Yes (No)

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Are there ways I can improve on my driving habits? Yes No

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Are there ways I can improve on my driving habits? Yes No

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If you notice more dents and dings in your vehicle and do not know how they got there? Yes (No)

If your answers “yes” to any of these questions, then it would be time to recognize that your fine motor skills may be declining. Based on your “yes” answers, ask yourself:

Are there ways I can improve on my driving habits? Yes No

Should I consider public transportation or an automobile means of transportation? Yes No

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