Sharing a Drive to Protect Motorists

CarFit® was developed through collaboration among the American Society on Aging, AARP, the American Occupational Therapy Association and AAA.

The American Society on Aging is a professional association that develops leadership, knowledge and skills to address the challenges and opportunities of a diverse aging society. **www.asaging.org**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and older. **www.aarp.org/life/drive**

The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people of all ages engage in life's daily activities, including driving, with independence and dignity. CarFit participation supported by University of Florida and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **www.aota.org/olderdriver**

AAA is a not-for-profit organization serving 48 million members in the United States and Canada. AAA has been a leading safety advocate for more than a century. **www.aaa.com or www.aaapublicaffairs.com**

CarFit® Assessments

CarFit is a program designed to give you a quick but comprehensive check of how well you and your vehicle work together. A trained professional will ask you simple questions and complete a 12-point CarFit checklist with you and your vehicle. The entire process takes about 15 minutes, and you leave with recommended car adjustments and adaptations, a list of resources in your area and greater peace of mind. CarFit checks are not available in all areas. Contact your local AAA club, AARP or an occupational therapist for more information on how to maintain and strengthen your driving health.

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CARFIT®

HELPING mature DRIVERS find their PERFECT FIT

Recognize the Need

The number of older drivers is growing. The U.S. Census Bureau has determined that by 2030, one in five drivers will be age 65 or older, which means there will be more than 30 million older drivers on our roads.

It is critically important that these mature drivers make safety a personal priority. Driving today is more difficult than ever because of more traffic, bigger vehicles and faster speeds. Engineers who design vehicles and roadways are making improvements to adapt to these demands, but older drivers themselves can take measures to ease the stress of driving.

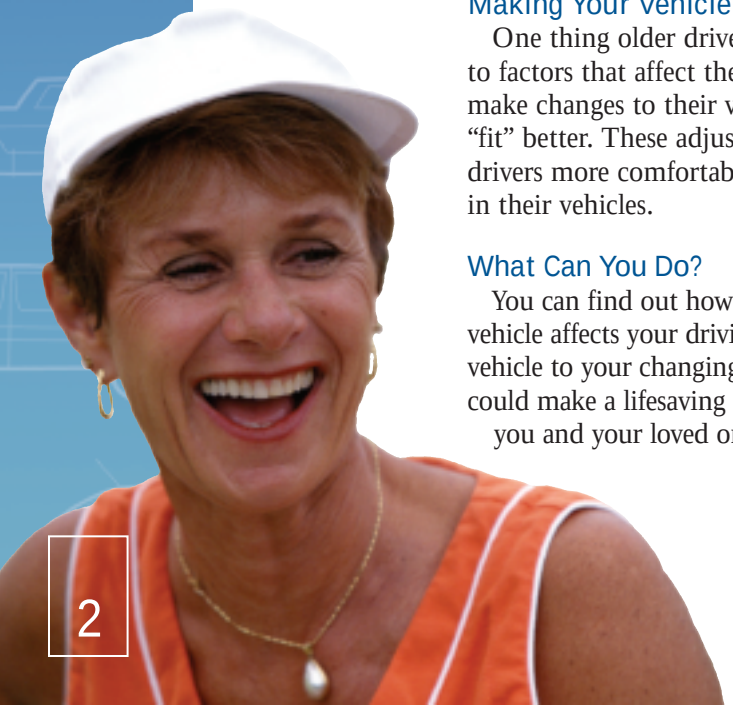
AM I REALLY at risk?

Making Your Vehicle "Fit"

One thing older drivers can do to adapt to factors that affect their driving is to make changes to their vehicle to make it "fit" better. These adjustments will make drivers more comfortable and in control in their vehicles.

What Can You Do?

You can find out how the "fit" of your vehicle affects your driving and adapt your vehicle to your changing needs. Doing this could make a lifesaving difference to both you and your loved ones.



We Change As We Age

As we age, changes in our vision, flexibility, strength, range of motion and even size and height may make us less comfortable and reduce our control behind the wheel.

Older drivers may need to find ways to cope with physical changes that include:

- Reduced strength and physical endurance.
- Stiff neck and limited neck rotation.
- Visual impairment, including problems with depth perception, high- and low-contrast vision, night vision and delayed recovery from glare.
- Effects of medications.
- Reduced overall range of motion.

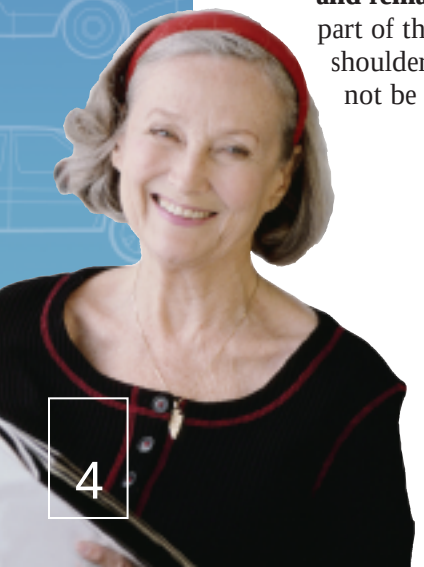
Increasing exercise, improving nutrition and making sure you get regular eye exams and medical checkups may help. In addition, automakers are designing vehicles geared to the needs of older drivers. These new models provide features such as more precise seating adjustments, more visible dashboard displays, wider doors, easier seat controls, night vision technology and adjustable gas and brake pedals.

Am I Comfortable and In Control Behind the Wheel?

Checking to see that you and your car are as good a fit as possible can be as important to your safety as a mechanical checkup.

A good fit between you and your vehicle means that you have:

- **A clear line of sight over the steering wheel.** You should be able to see at least three inches above the wheel.
- **Plenty of room between your breastbone (or chest) and the front airbag and steering wheel.** The ideal distance is at least 10 to 12 inches.
- **A seat you fit in comfortably and safely.** You should be able to adjust the seat for good visibility and easy access to controls.
- **Properly adjusted headrests.** This can save you from neck injury. When adjusting your headrest, you may want to ask a friend to help you grasp the headrest and pull it up. The center of the headrest should be against the back of your head, not against your neck.
- **Easy access to gas and brake pedals.** You should be able to reach the pedals without having to stretch too far, and you should be able to completely depress the brake pedal. You should also be able to move your foot easily from the gas to the brake.
- **A seat belt that holds you in the proper position and remains comfortable as you drive.** The lower part of the belt should go across your hips, and the shoulder harness should go across your rib cage and not be under your arm.



You also should be able to:

- Reach the shoulder harness and buckle and unbuckle the seat belt without difficulty.
- Get into and out of your vehicle easily.
- Turn your head to look over your shoulder when you change lanes.
- Sit as comfortably as you can, without knee, back, hip, neck or shoulder stiffness or pain.

Position Your Mirrors So You Have No Blind Spots

You can adjust your mirrors to greatly reduce blind spots.

- Before you start your vehicle, adjust your rearview mirror so that it is positioned to show you as much of the rear window as possible.
- Next, place your head against the left window and adjust the left side-view mirror so you can just see the side of your vehicle.
- Then put your head in the middle of the vehicle, above the center console, and adjust the right side-view mirror so you can just see the side of your vehicle.

Now you should have an unbroken view of a vehicle in your left side-view mirror, rearview mirror and right side-view mirror as it approaches and passes you. You may need to make minor adjustments to the mirrors to have an ideal view.

This view from your mirrors will take getting used to. Therefore, it is important before driving with the new settings to practice looking at objects placed to the side and behind your car. Ask a friend to stand behind and to the rear of the car. With this added experience of using your rearview mirrors, you will have more confidence once you take to the road. In addition to using your side-view mirrors, you also should double-check by looking over your shoulder to confirm the way is clear.

Adaptive Devices Can Help

If you find that your vehicle is not a perfect fit, you probably do not need to replace it. A variety of adaptive features can be added to a vehicle to help compensate for physical changes you may experience or simply to make the vehicle fit you more comfortably and safely.

Some of these devices are simple changes you can make yourself. But many will require you to get some training by a driver rehabilitation specialist to ensure these changes can help you continue to drive with the control and awareness you have been accustomed to.

Among the simple adaptive devices that do not require any special training are:

- Easy-locking seat belts.
- Visor extenders.
- Steering wheel covers to improve grip on the steering wheel.
- Seat and back support cushions to relieve back pain or improve line of sight. Such cushions, however, are likely to change how you see out of your mirrors and make contact with your gas and brake pedals.

With other adaptive devices, you need to get the right product for your needs and may need training on how to use the device to maximize your safety. These devices include:

- Larger, panoramic rear and side mirrors.
- Pedal extenders.
- Leverage handles to assist in opening a car door.
- Hand controls.
- Seat lifts to aid in getting out of a car seat.
- Car lifts and carrying devices for a wheelchair or scooter.
- A steering device to aid in grabbing the wheel and making turns easier or more efficient.

Before you purchase such adaptive features, you should have a thorough evaluation by a driver rehabilitation specialist.

Many driver rehabilitation specialists are occupational therapists who are highly trained to evaluate and provide solutions for older adults with physical and visual challenges associated with driving. They can also ensure that you get the right equipment, have it properly installed and receive proper training in the use of the equipment or devices before you take to the road in your vehicle.