



Driving as an Older Adult

It is important to take the responsibility of driving seriously and recognize how changes in both mental and physical abilities can affect our ability to drive safely. How we drive affects not only our own safety but that of the pedestrians, bikers and the drivers/passengers in other vehicles around us.

Driving is a multifaceted activity that requires diverse cognitive skills as well as specific levels of physical strength, coordination and flexibility. Our ability to drive safely is also impacted by our vision, reaction time, medications we take and levels of pain and fatigue.

Drivers who are 65 years old and older are more likely to have a medical condition and/or use prescription or over-the-counter medications that can affect their driving.

“Warning Signs” of unsafe driving include:

- Frequently getting lost on once familiar roads
- Being unable to see clearly
- Headlights from other vehicles obstructing your sight
- Being intimidated by passing vehicles
- Being unsure of your parking skills
- Straining to read road signs
- Having trouble following construction detours
- Being unsure of your reflexes and reaction time
- Finding it difficult to react quickly in certain situations
- Having problems with range of motion when needing to look back or to the side quickly
- Driving at inappropriate speeds
- Experiencing frequent close calls or being honked at
- Having family, friends, or police officers tell you that you are unsafe

(over)

- Having difficulty feeling your feet, your foot slipping off the gas or brake, or confusing gas and brake pedals

If you are concerned or a family member or friend has expressed concern about your driving, consider having an evaluation. In our area:

1. [Mercy Medical Center Driving Rehabilitation](#)

175 Carew Street, Springfield

413-748-6880

www.mercycares.com/driver-advisement

There are driver training programs available. A couple on Lathrop's Northampton campus recently completed the AARP 4-hour Smart Drive Online Course and found it to be very helpful. They felt the course was a way of "refreshing/improving our driving skills and boosting our driving safety awareness and confidence". Options include:

1. [AARP Smart Driver Course](#)

888-687-2277

<https://www.aarpdriversafety.org/>

2. [AAA Senior Driving](#)

413-992-6637 (this is the number for the Hadley office- the nearest to Lathrop)

<http://seniordriving.aaa.com/>