



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 four 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 driving stress and enhance safety.

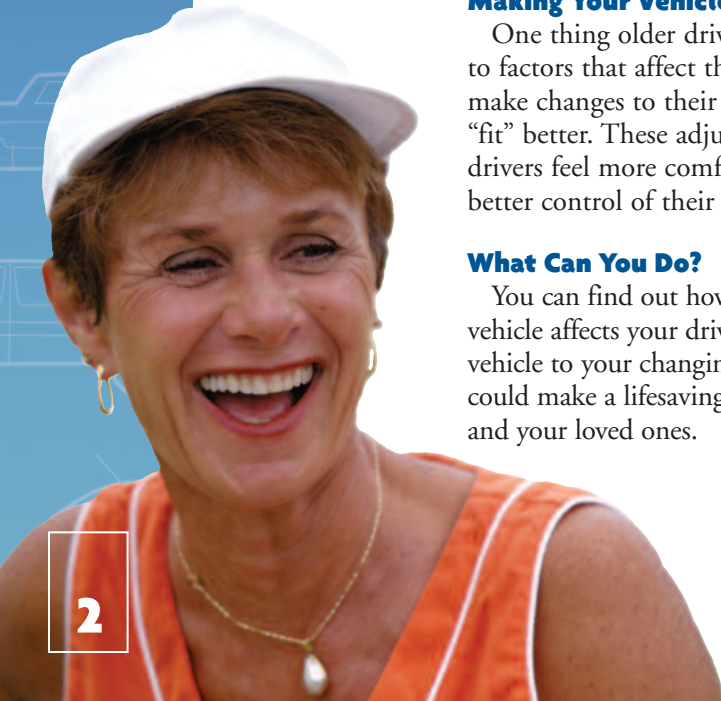
**AM I
REALLY
at risk?**

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 help drivers feel more comfortable and in better control of 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 you and your loved ones.





We Change As We Age

As we age, changes in our vision, flexibility, strength, range of motion and even 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 head rotation.
- Visual impairments, 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 and flexibility.

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, clearer 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 vehicle fit well together can be as important to your safety as a mechanical checkup. A good fit means 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 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 head restraint.** This can help prevent neck injury. When adjusting your head restraint, you may want to ask a friend to help you grasp the head restraint and pull it up. The center of the head restraint should be against the center of 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 lap belt should go across your hips, and the shoulder belt should go across your rib cage and not under your arm.

You also should be able to:

- Reach the shoulder belt 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 changing lanes and backing up.
- Sit comfortably, without knee, back, hip, neck or shoulder stiffness or pain.





Position Your Mirrors to Minimize Blind Spots

You can adjust your mirrors to greatly reduce blind spots.

- Before starting your vehicle, adjust the rearview mirror so it shows 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 position 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 a better view of approaching and passing vehicles. Minor mirror adjustments may be needed to ensure an ideal view.

It may take time to adjust to this view. Therefore, it is important before driving with the new settings to practice looking at objects at the side and rear of your car. With this added experience of using your vehicle's mirrors, you will have more confidence on 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 help compensate for physical changes 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 some training by a driver rehabilitation specialist to ensure the changes can help you continue driving with the control and awareness you have been accustomed to.

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

- Seat belt extenders.
- Visor extenders.
- Steering wheel covers.



Other adaptive devices, which may require training to use, include:

- Larger, panoramic rearview and side-view mirrors.
- Pedal extenders.
- Leverage handles to assist in opening car doors.
- Hand controls.
- Seat lifts to ease getting out of a car.
- Chair 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.
- Seat and back support cushions to relieve back pain or improve line of sight. Such cushions, however, are likely to affect how you see out of your mirrors and make contact with gas and brake pedals.

Before purchasing adaptive features, you should have a thorough evaluation by a driver rehabilitation specialist. Many are occupational therapists who are highly trained to evaluate and provide solutions for older adults with physical and visual challenges that can

affect driving. They can also ensure you get the right equipment, have it properly installed and receive proper training before you take to the road.



Sharing a Drive to Protect Motorists

CarFit was developed by the American Society on Aging in collaboration with AARP, American Occupational Therapy Association and AAA.



AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and older.

www.aarp.org/families/driver_safety



Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people of all ages engage in life's daily activities, including driving, with independence and dignity.

www.aota.org/olderdriver



AAA is a not-for-profit organization serving more than 51 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.AAA.com/seniors

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. The entire process takes about 20 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 state office or an occupational therapy practitioner for more information on how to maintain and strengthen your driving health, or visit www.car-fit.org.