

Driver's safety is an important and sensitive issue for older drivers. Physical and mental changes may occur as we age which may interfere with our ability to drive.

However, statistics show that older adults are safe drivers. Older adults have a high percentage of seat belt use, fewer speeding citations, reckless driving or alcohol related charges.

On the other hand older drivers may have an increased risk of accidents and injuries due to medical issues, medication usage and general physical decline.

Studies show that the actual number of accidents involving older drivers decreases as age increases. Experts state that this may be the result of driving fewer miles and not at night or driving during rush hours.

Statistics demonstrate that especially after age 75 older drivers have a higher risk of accidents for every mile driven. In fact, the rate is approximately the same as our youngest drivers ages 16 to 24. Also the fatality rate increases significantly after the age of 75. This higher rate is due to the inability of older adults to withstand the physical trauma of an accident.

We have had individuals in our Court who clearly had significant physical and/or mental issues which made it apparent that the person should not be driving. In these cases we ordered that the person must be retested if they wanted to continue to drive. The defendants may not have been pleased but, it was done in the interest of not only their own safety but the safety of other drivers.

Taking away a drivers license is an emotionally charged subject because it significantly impacts the independence of the older adult and affects their entire family.

Often, however the burden falls on adult children or a spouse to broach this sensitive subject. They have the advantage of having observed driving habits over time. They may want to discuss the problem with the family doctor whose opinion is often valued by older drivers. However, some Physicians may not be willing to become involved with this issue. Sometime, modifying driving habits such as limiting driving to familiar routes, driving only during the day time or when the weather is good may be sufficient.

The Ohio Traffic Safety Office is currently revising their Senior Driver Program. For questions concerning Senior Driver initiatives, please contact the Ohio Traffic Safety Office at 614-466-3250.

The Cleveland Clinic offers an Adult Driver Evaluation and Rehabilitation program. Their goal is to help individuals return to independent driving, as long as they are safe to do so. Please contact 216-445-8479 to make an appointment.

You may also, checkout AAA website at www.aaaohio.com to measure your crash risk. They have partnered with Posit Science to bring you DriveSharp. This is a brain fitness program that is clinically proven to help drivers be sharper and cut their crash risk by up to 50%. This program will take just 5 minutes to measure your crash risk.

Curtailing an older persons driving is not easy for anyone involved. However, it may be necessary if there are genuine safety concerns to protect both the older adult and public.