



**Comfort  
Keepers®**

a *sodexo* brand

## Seniors and Driving Safety

### Driving Independence

Driving is an extraordinarily important component of our independence, but as we get older, it can become more difficult because of physical or cognitive limitations. There are several factors that ultimately influence a senior's driving ability, from stiffening joints to eyesight changes, and even prescribed medications that affect reaction time.

According to Consumer Reports, studies indicate that not being able to drive can increase one's mortality risk and chances of suffering from depression.

While the combination of these factors can make driving dangerous for older adults, there are tips and best practices they can follow to ensure their safety on the road and preserve their independence. Below are a few he or she can start with:

### Driving Safety for Seniors

#### *Preventative Measures*

- Schedule a visit with your eye doctor at least once a year, and determine the best solution for eyesight improvement.
- Report any pain or stiffness to your physician, especially if it already interferes with driving abilities.
- Get a hearing test (at least every three years past the age of 50), and determine if a hearing aid is necessary.
- Review medications carefully, paying close attention to warnings/potential side effects – and talk with your physician about how all current medications affect driving.
- Have your driving evaluated by a rehabilitation specialist or occupational therapist, who will help in advising next steps.

#### *General Safety Tips*

- Keep the car quiet and distraction-free so that you can hear emergency sirens, horns from other vehicles, or problems from your own vehicle.
- Keep a fair amount of distance between you and the next vehicle.
- Don't drive without proper aids (e.g., eye glasses, contacts, hearing aids).
- Avoid driving in rush-hour traffic or in inclement weather.

### Having the Discussion

Encourage your loved one to follow the safety tips above, but also understand that there comes a time when he or she may no longer be a safe driver. If there have been minor/major accidents, expressed anxiety regarding driving, complaints from other drivers, or recommendations from a physician, it may be time to discuss his or her driving.

When discussing any sensitive subject with your senior loved one, be prepared to face some initial opposition and negative emotions. Be a good listener and don't become defensive, but also support your position objectively. Focus on your loved one's driving ability, without directly mentioning age, and reinforce the overall goal of preserving his or her safety – and the safety of others on the road. Additionally, be sure that your loved one understands that there are transportation alternatives available, and that you are willing to work to find a solution.

### Comfort Keepers® Can Help

The compassionate, professional team at Comfort Keepers® recognizes just how important driving is to your senior loved one. That's why our caregivers are available to provide safe, dependable transportation to take him or her wherever they wish to go. Whether it's to the community center to visit with friends, or the doctor's office for a scheduled appointment, your loved one can depend on Comfort Keepers, long after he or she has hung up the keys. Contact your local Comfort Keepers office to learn more about transportation and other services.

**Resources:**

National Institute on Aging. "Older Drivers." Web. 2016.

SeniorDriving.AAA.com. "Conversations About Driving: Deal with Negative Reactions." Web. 2017.

Consumer Reports. "How Seniors Are Driving Safer, Driving Longer" by Michael Tortorello. Web. 2017.