



Too old to drive



How old is too old to drive? It's a tough subject for most families but it's a serious matter. Of course there's no definite answer. It depends on how physically and cognitively healthy someone remains. But it also depends on where you live:

An Associated Press review found a "hodgepodge" of state rules governing older drivers. Over 34 states plus the district of Columbia have some sort of special rules in place regarding older adults and driver's licenses.

In some states, seniors are required to renew their license more frequently than younger drivers; and in others, more extensive vision testing is required.

The age which these requirements kick in varies greatly. In Texas, shorter license renewals kick in at 85; in Georgia it starts at age 59. In Maine, a vision test is required once a driver turns 40, and every second renewal after that until age 62; beyond that an eye exam is required every renewal.

The problem is there's no easy screening tool that licensing authorities can use to spot people with subtle health risks. So some states use birthdays as a proxy for more scrutiny instead

Joseph Coughlin, head of the Massachusetts Institute of technology's age lab, puts the problem with setting age-based driving requirements succinctly: Birthdays don't kill. Health conditions do.

Measured by miles driven, crash rates begin to climb in the 70s, with a sharper jump at age 80, according to the insurance Institute for Highway safety. But septuagenarians and octogenarians on the whole still fare better than teens and 20 something drivers. Only past age 85 do older drivers surpass teens at a rate of deadly crashes per mile

Part two of the issue is how to get an impaired driver to quit.

Getting an obstinate elder to give up driving can be a difficult hurdle to overcome because senior, like all of us, don't want to give up their freedom of driving. But when you understand that seniors have a four times higher accident rate, and a nine times higher fatal accident rate, families realize the importance of acting sooner than later to prevent a catastrophe.

You don't have to be the bad guy if you know what to do. If the situation is critical, you need to act immediately. Have a trusted healthcare provider check out their eyes and reflexes. If they shouldn't be driving anymore, confidently ask for a letter to take to the department of motor vehicles. Call and explain the situation to their supervisor. Tell your

loved one that someone must have reported them driving erratically, because they have to go to the DMV for a “routine” eye exam. If the DMV ends up taking the license away, you get to be the good guy, saying how sorry you are that this has happened while assuring them of your continued support. This way, you’re not a horrible person who took their last pleasure in life away.

Arrange for alternative transportation such as inexpensive transportation specifically for seniors which is available in many areas, so they don’t feel trapped at home. Take away the car keys, but if you fear that they may still try to drive put “The Club” on the steering wheel. Also explain that if you sell the car, the money that they saved on their insurance and maintenance can be used for their transportation needs.

Once again here at the Legitimate Practitioner, we provide you and your family a possible option for one of life’s difficult decisions that may save not only the life of your loved ones but that of potential innocent victims.