

# SENIOR LIVING GUIDE

## Staying Safe Behind the Wheel – Older Driver Awareness

It's critical to focus your attention on staying safe on the road. Many older adults rely on driving to maintain their daily routines and sense of freedom, but aging can bring changes that make driving more challenging.

### COMMON AGE-RELATED CHANGES THAT AFFECT DRIVING

**Stiff Joints & Slower Reflexes:** Arthritis or muscle stiffness can make it harder to turn the steering wheel, check blind spots or brake quickly. Light stretching, gentle movement and adaptive car tools like steering wheel grips or larger mirrors can improve your comfort and control.

**Hearing Changes:** Difficulty hearing horns, sirens or approaching vehicles can affect your reaction time. Annual hearing screenings and minimizing background noise in the car such as music and open windows can help improve your awareness.



JULIE ROSE

### Vision Changes:

Age is often accompanied by reduced night vision, glare sensitivity and slower focus changes. It's important to schedule regular eye exams, keep your windshields clean and limit your nighttime and bad-weather driving.

### SIGNS IT MAY BE TIME FOR A DRIVING EVALUATION

- Near misses, scrapes or hitting curbs while turning
- Confusion driving in familiar areas
- Difficulty judging distances between cars or objects, or reading road signs
- Delayed reactions at intersections and stop lights
- Concerned feedback from family or friends

Be aware of these things and consider how regularly any of these issues occur. It may be beneficial to consider a driving assessment through an occupational therapist or certified driving rehabilitation specialist.

### HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

If you start to see any signs of driving difficulty, approach your loved one early about this. It's important to do so long before it becomes urgent and their safety is at risk. This way you can help them ease



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into getting needed safety supports in place or determine alternatives to driving themselves. Emphasize that the goal is to stay mobile and engaged – just doing so more safely.

### COLD WEATHER IS HERE – WINTER PREPAREDNESS TIPS FOR SENIORS

Cold weather brings seasonal risks that can affect safety and wellbeing – especially for older adults. Here are a few reminders as winter sets in:

- **Prevent Slips and Falls** – Keep your entryways and sidewalks clear of ice. Wear shoes with good traction and use eco-friendly salt or sand where needed.
- **Layer Up Wisely** – Older adults can lose body heat more quickly. Dress in layered clothing. Wearing hats helps contain your body heat. Gloves and warm socks ensure your extremities don't get too cold and help to keep the chill out.
- **Stay Weather-Aware** – Avoid driving in icy or snowy conditions whenever possible. Keep an emergency kit with blankets, snacks, and a phone charger in your car.
- **Plan Ahead** – Stock up on medications, groceries and supplies before major storms. Make sure you have people who will check on you if you are snowed in.

All of us at Paladin Life Care hope you stay safe and warm and enjoy a happy, healthy 2026!

*Julie Rose, M.Ed., CDP, CHC, CAPS is CEO of Paladin Life Care providing exceptional care and advocacy for senior clients and those with disabilities in Virginia, DC, and Maryland.*



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