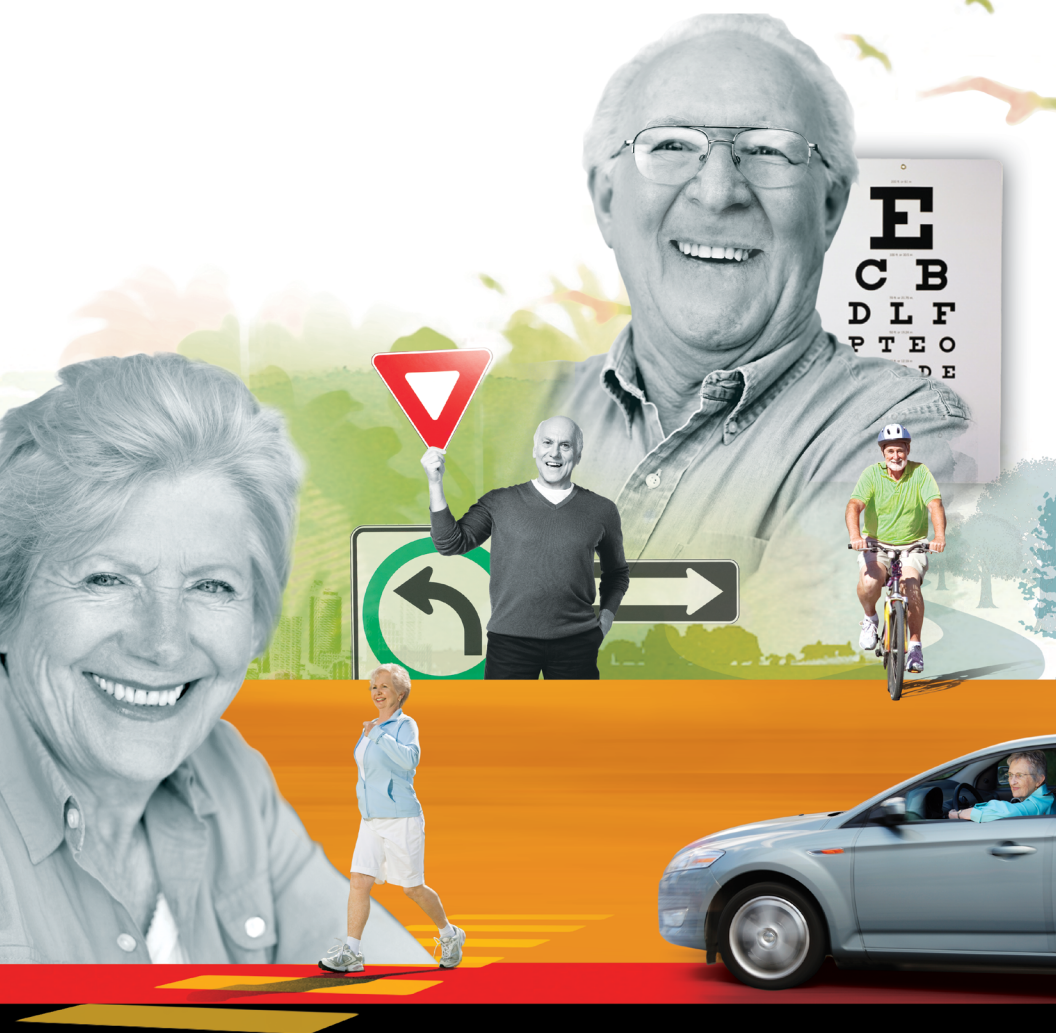


HEALTH IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT



Québec 

SENIORS, are you at risk?

Driving an automobile is a complex task with many requirements, such as:

- > a good understanding of road safety rules, road signs and traffic signals;
- > the skills necessary to drive effectively, including the ability to handle vehicle controls easily;
- > good driving behaviour;
- > good physical and mental health.

For example, to drive, you must:

- > have good vision;
- > be able to move all parts of your body easily;
- > perform movements quickly and efficiently;
- > have a good memory and exercise good judgment. Among other things, this means being aware of your own capabilities and limitations as well as being able to analyze what is going on around you.

To be able to drive effectively, you must meet all of these requirements. If not, as the holder of a driver's licence, you may be endangering yourself and other road users. If you pose a potential risk, you will lose your driving privilege.



When you're driving, do you experience any of the following problems?

- > Are your movements limited when you're behind the wheel?
- > Are you confused when you have to enter or exit a road?
- > Do you forget which route you usually take?
- > Do you stop at the last minute at an intersection?
- > Do you need a passenger to help you drive?
- > Do you have difficulty yielding the right of way?
- > Do you have difficulty backing up your vehicle?
- > Do you have problems reading or understanding traffic signs or signals?
- > Do other drivers you encounter along the road regularly honk at you or try to get your attention?
- > Do your friends and family express concern when you get behind the wheel?
- > Have you noticed some people hesitate or refuse to get into a vehicle when you're at the wheel?
- > Do you have minor accidents from time to time?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, it is important to:

- > discuss the situation with your family and friends;
- > consult a health care professional;
- > update your knowledge or review your driving techniques;
- > plan for other means of getting around.



Healthy living

Some lifestyle habits can help preserve good physical and mental fitness. Sound health is an essential condition to holding a driver's licence.

That's why you should:

- > consult your physician or health care professional regularly to help resolve any health issues that can arise;
- > follow the directions for any medication you are prescribed;
- > exercise regularly;
- > eat right;
- > monitor your weight;
- > do not smoke;
- > get enough rest;
- > do not abuse alcohol;
- > stimulate your brain by reading, doing crossword puzzles or playing board games.

Change your driving habits

Even if your health is deteriorating, depending on the type of health issue you are experiencing, you may still be able to drive safely. You will, however, have to change the way you drive.

These changes may include the following:

- > Avoid driving during rush hour.
- > Plan for long trips and include rest stops along the way.
- > Drive in familiar surroundings.
- > Avoid driving at night or in poor weather.
- > Avoid driving if you are not feeling well or have taken medication that can interfere with concentration or cause drowsiness.
- > Choose a vehicle that can make driving easier (automatic transmission, power accessories, etc.).



Examine the situation

Despite your best efforts, sooner or later, your health may force you to stop driving. For some people, this can happen suddenly, for others it may be a gradual process.

You should ask yourself the following question: Can I still get behind the wheel without risking an accident that could injure me or other people I encounter on the road? If you can no longer answer yes to this question, you will have to consider other options for getting around.

This is a very difficult decision to make. Giving up driving may leave you thinking that you will no longer have a social life or that you'll become isolated. That is why it is important to examine all the available alternatives to driving in order to prepare for life after driving.

Think of alternatives

For some, carpooling with family members or friends is a solution. For individuals in large urban centres, there are bus services. For others, taxi or paratransit services may be viable options.

Some people prefer to use travel companion services offered by community organizations in their area. Others move to be closer to services and loved ones.



If you are turning 75

The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) requires holders of a Class 5, 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D or 8 licence who turn 75 to disclose their state of health using the self-declaration of medical information form.

The SAAQ will send you a copy of the form along with an explanatory letter 6 months before your birthday.

If you are 80 or older

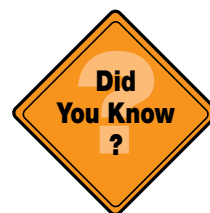
Once they turn 80, and every two years thereafter, holders of a Class 5, 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D or 8 licence must undergo a medical exam and an eye test carried out by a health care professional.

The SAAQ will send you an explanatory letter along with the forms to be completed. Once the forms have been completed and signed by the appropriate health care professionals, you must return them to the SAAQ. You have 90 days to fulfill this obligation.

The SAAQ will then inform you in writing of its decision. If you decide not to return the forms, your driver's licence could be suspended.

It should be noted that a driver's licence is rarely suspended as a result of this assessment. For many individuals, however, conditions may be added to their driver's licence. These may include:

- > driving only during daylight hours;
- > wearing corrective lenses to operate a vehicle;
- > avoiding driving on highways.



Under the *Highway Safety Code*, driver's licence holders have 30 days to notify the SAAQ of any change in their health condition. To notify the SAAQ of a change, you can:

- > go to an SAAQ service centre;
- > contact the SAAQ by phone or in writing;
- > ask a health care professional for a medical assessment report and submit this report to the SAAQ;
- > fill out the section provided on your driver's licence renewal notice to declare an illness or functional disability.

Talk about it

There are a number of community resources available or persons you can consult to discuss your driving situation. For example, you can:

- > discuss your situation with a health care professional:
 - > physician,
 - > specialist physician,
 - > optometrist,
 - > occupational therapist,
 - > etc.
- > Contact your health and social services centre for tips on healthy living.
- > Contact the SAAQ for more information.

You can also:

- > refresh your driving knowledge and techniques with agencies devoted to improving road safety;
- > consult reference material available at your local library or online, such as the SAAQ's website (saaq.gouv.qc.ca) where you can, in particular, test your knowledge about road safety and driving an automobile.



SPOUSE, RELATIVES, FRIENDS – watch for signs.

In some cases, due to health problems, elderly drivers may no longer be able to assess their ability to drive safely. Their friends and relatives must watch for signs.

Whenever possible, you should allow the driver to make the decision to stop driving. Be aware, however, that not everyone is necessarily prepared to give up driving.

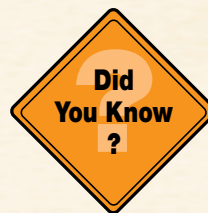
To convince a senior to stop driving, it is usually preferable, even essential, to ask someone close to the individual to speak with them, such as a good friend, spouse, son or daughter.

There are a number of ways you can address the issue. The approach used will depend on the individual's receptiveness and the urgency of the situation.

You can:

- > use a direct approach, speaking frankly (for example: "You should have your health checked before you have an accident.");
- > use reasoning and compassion (for example: "I wouldn't want anything to happen to you.");
- > find a reason when the situation is urgent and requires immediate action (for example: "Your car isn't safe anymore... The brakes are failing...");

If a senior refuses to take action, ask for help from your health and social services centre or report the situation to the SAAQ.



Any citizen who has doubts about someone's ability to safely drive a vehicle can notify the SAAQ and describe the events witnessed. Any information provided must make it possible to positively identify the driver, for example:

- > name and date of birth;
- > name and address;
- > driver's licence number;
- > driver's name and vehicle registration number.



To contact us

Online

saaq.gouv.qc.ca

By Telephone

1-800-361-7620

TDD/TTY

Deaf or hearing impaired

Montréal

514-954-7763

Elsewhere in Québec

1-800-565-7763 (toll-free)

By Mail

Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec

C. P. 19600, succursale Terminus
Québec (Québec) G1K 8J6

In Person

Go to an SAAQ service centre.

Phone us before leaving.
In most cases, we can provide
you with the information
you need.

Version originale française disponible
sur demande.

**Société de l'assurance
automobile**

Québec 