

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 highway 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 problems or difficulty with one or more of the following?

- Are some of the movements you require to drive limited?
- Are you confused when you have to enter or exit a road?
- Do you forget which route you usually take?
- Do you react at the last minute when stopping 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 beep at you or signal you regularly?
- 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 or review your driving knowledge and techniques;
- > or perhaps, choose other means of getting around.



Healthy Living

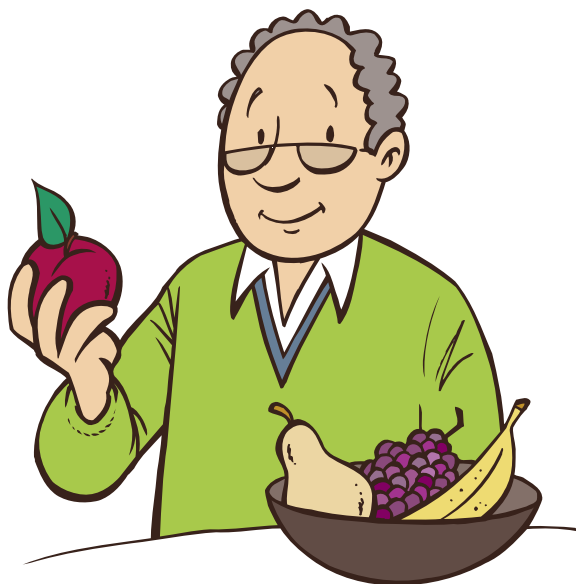
Some lifestyle habits can help preserve good physical and mental fitness. Sound health is an essential condition to holding a driver's licence.

That's why you should:

- > consult your physician or health care professional regularly to help resolve any health issues that can arise;
- > follow the treatment dosage for 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.



6

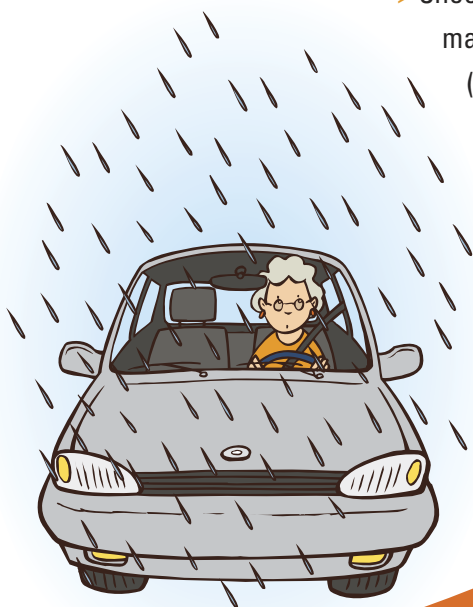


Change How You Drive

If your health is deteriorating, depending on the type of condition you may be 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 feel ill or have taken medication that can interfere with concentration or cause drowsiness.
- > Choose a vehicle that can make the driving task 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. In each case, however, coming to the realization that you can no longer drive requires careful thought, because every individual has a personal responsibility to road safety.

You should ask yourself the following question: am I still able to get behind the wheel without risking an accident that could injure me or someone else who crosses my path? If you can no longer answer yes to this question, you will have to consider other options for getting around. This is obviously a difficult decision to make. That's why it's important to prepare for the prospect by contemplating the likelihood well in advance and gathering information about other means of transportation available in the community for life after you retire from driving.

Giving up driving may leave you thinking that you will no longer have a social life or that you'll become isolated because you can no longer rely on your usual means of transportation to get around.

That's why it is so important to examine all the alternatives to driving available, to prepare for life after driving.



Alternatives

For some, carpooling with family members or friends is a solution. For individuals in large urban centres, there are bus services. For others, taxis or a paratransit service may be viable options that are no more expensive than maintaining a motor vehicle. For example, did you know that in 2005, if you owned a 2005 Chevrolet Cavalier Z24 vehicle, with a 4-cylinder 2.4-litre engine and travelled 12,000 km a year, the annual operating and depreciation costs totalled \$8,502 (data based on a gas price of 86.9 ¢ a litre)?

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



If You Are Age 75 and Over

Do you hold a class 5, 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D or 8 driver's licence? At ages 75, 80 and every two years thereafter, the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) requires you to submit to a medical and visual evaluation that is conducted by a health care professional.

The SAAQ sends you a letter explaining what is required and the necessary forms to be filled out. Once the health care professionals have filled out and signed the forms, keep one copy of each form and return the forms to the SAAQ within 90 days of receiving the initial letter.

When the SAAQ receives the forms, it will issue a letter informing you of its decision. Please note that if you choose not to return the necessary forms to the SAAQ, your driver's licence may be suspended.



10

It is of interest to note that a driver's licence is rarely suspended as a result of this evaluation. For many individuals, however, conditions may be added to their driver's licence. These may include the following:

- > Drive only during daylight hours.
- > Wear corrective lenses to operate a vehicle.
- > Refrain from driving on expressways.

Did You Know That...?

Under the Highway Safety Code, the holder of a driver's licence has 30 days to notify the SAAQ of any change in his or her health condition. To notify the SAAQ of a change, the driver's licence holder 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

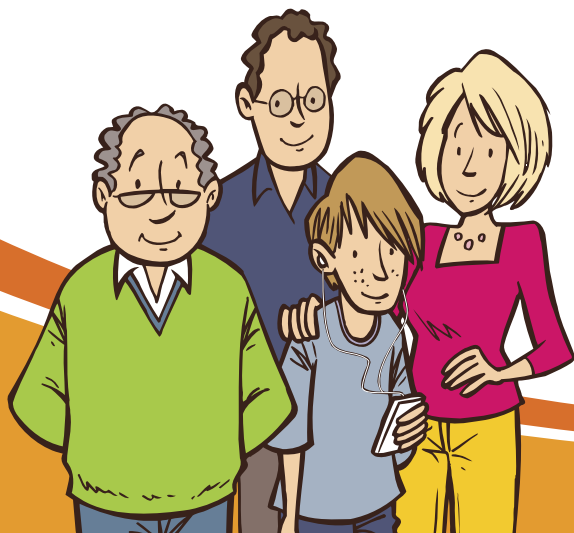
There are a number of community resources available or persons you can consult to discuss your automobile driving situation.

For example:

- > 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 by registering with agencies devoted to improving road safety;
- > consult reference material available at your local library or online, such as the SAAQ's Web site (www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca), where you can test your road safety and driving knowledge.



SPOUSES, FAMILY, FRIENDS – watch for signs.

In some cases, due to health problems, an elderly driver may no longer be able to assess his or her ability to drive safely. This individual's circle of friends and family must watch for signs.

Where possible, you should allow the driver to make the decision to stop driving. Be warned, 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 type of approach will depend on the individual's responsiveness and the urgency of the situation. You can:

- > be direct, use an open approach (for example: "You should have a doctor assess your health 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 cannot continue (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 your findings to the SAAQ.



Did You Know That...?

Anyone who has reason to believe that his or her life is in danger on the road can anonymously notify the SAAQ about a driver who shows obvious signs of unsafe behaviour, by describing the incident they witnessed. If this individual does not know the driver, he or she can describe the incident by indicating when he or she witnessed the incident and by providing the vehicle's licence plate number.



To Contact Us

Online

www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca

By Phone

Québec (city and vicinity)

418 643-7620

Montréal

514 873-7620

Elsewhere (Québec, Canada, U.S.)

1 800 361-7620 (toll free)

TDD/TTY

Hearing impaired

Montréal

514 954-7763

Elsewhere in Québec

1 800 565-7763 (toll free)

By Mail

Société de l'assurance automobile
du Québec

P.O. Box 19500, Terminus

Québec (Québec) G1K 8J5

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 française disponible
sur demande.***



**Société de l'assurance
automobile**

Québec

