



## PART 2: MAINTAINING DRIVING SKILLS DURING LOCK-DOWN

The second of four safety bulletins to provide advice for older drivers during the lock-down period.

### INTRODUCTION

The Older Drivers Forum consists of road safety experts and volunteers, focused on how to keep older drivers driving safely, for longer.

Lots of useful information can be found on our web site [www.olderdriversforum.com](http://www.olderdriversforum.com)

#### ✓ OUR AIM

With older drivers following government instructions and **social distancing to save lives**, many are also taking a break from driving.

**This bulletin focuses on how older drivers can maintain the physical abilities and knowledge they will need when they return to driving.**

### PHYSICAL ABILITIES

#### ✓ MOBILITY

Good mobility is a vital driving attribute. 50% of fatal accidents involving drivers over 75 take place at junctions. A major contributory factor is poor neck flexibility and a compromised ability to look quickly from left to right. As we get older, we also lose muscle mass. This can accelerate if we are inactive, so it is vitally important to stay as active as possible.

Starting a daily exercise and stretching routine can feel intimidating, but there are lots of simple routines available which will help maintain full movement and strength of neck, hands and legs. These exercises also decrease anxiety and aid better sleep.

- AGE UK has exercise videos appropriate for older people at [www.generationgames.org.uk](http://www.generationgames.org.uk)
- Maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids to keep fully hydrated.



## ✓ EYESIGHT

Failing eyesight is the main reason older drivers retire from driving, which is why eye health and eyesight tests are so important.

- For eye health advice:  
[www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/eye-health-tips-for-older-people/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/eye-health-tips-for-older-people/)  
[www.olderdriversforum.com/eyesight-and-medicines/](http://www.olderdriversforum.com/eyesight-and-medicines/)
- You can find out more about eyesight on our web page  
<https://olderdriversforum.com/eyesight-and-medicines/>
- For details of the minimum eyesight standards required for driving:  
[www.specsavers.co.uk/eye-health/do-i-need-an-eye-test](http://www.specsavers.co.uk/eye-health/do-i-need-an-eye-test)

## ✓ REACTIONS

Being able to quickly process complex driving situations is another vital driving skill. With age the speed at which we process information slows, so constantly use your brain and push it to its full capacity to stay alert. Some daily exercises to keep your brain and reflexes sharp are:

- The well-known ruler reaction test.
- Virtual speed-crossword competitions or other brain games with family and friends.
- Speed reading.
- Jigsaws.
- Practising making decisions in your everyday life as quickly as possible.
- Get regular, good-quality sleep, but do not get too much as this can make you feel sluggish.

## MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### ✓ MEDICAL CONDITIONS

- Check with your GP on whether any new medical conditions should be reported to the DVLA. Currently there are 183 conditions.

### ✓ MEDICATIONS

- Check with your GP or pharmacist on whether any new medications will impact on the ability to drive safely. If they do, then ask if there is an alternative.
- Advice can be found at: <https://olderdriversforum.com/eyesight-and-medicines/>

## KNOWLEDGE

### ✓ Highway Code

- Update your knowledge of the Code. This contains legal requirements for car and motorcycle drivers, horse riders and pedestrians.
- The 2020 Code was published in August 2019 and can be downloaded at:  
[www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk](http://www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk)