

Fast Facts 41

Maintaining Your Driving Independence



Changes That Affect Driver Safety

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) recognizes that declining physical, emotional, and mental abilities increase the risk of unsafe driving and collisions. Conditions that may affect your ability to drive safely:

- Vision Changes
- Macular degeneration
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Dementia
- Stroke
- Alzheimer's disease
- Brain injury
- Arthritis
- Limited joint flexibility
- Diabetes
- Neuropathy
- Impaired sensation
- Paralysis
- Amputation
- Physical Limitations
- Excessive muscle weakness

DMV wants to keep you licensed while you can safely operate a motor vehicle.

Here are some testing tips and helpful information to keep you driving safely.

Vision Tests are required of original and renewal driver's license (DL) applicants. To get the best results when taking a vision test, be rested and bring your newest glasses or contact lenses. You will read eye chart lines with both eyes and each eye individually. If you take the vision test wearing glasses or contact lenses, your DL will have a "corrective lenses" restriction.

NOTE: If you wear corrective contact lenses for the vision test, notify the DMV representative who is testing you. If you cannot read the eye chart, we will test your distance vision on a vision testing machine. If you wear bifocals, look through the distance part.

DMV Visual Acuity (Vision) Screening Standard required for a DL:

- 20/40 with both eyes together.
- 20/40 in one eye and at least 20/70 in the other eye.

Visual Acuity is the ability to see clearly, sharply, and recognize small details. If you cannot meet the vision screening standard, you **must** have a minimum visual acuity in one eye better than 20/200. You may wear glasses or contact lenses to meet the standard but not a bioptic telescopic or similar lens.

Monovision is one eye for distance and one for closeup. If you have monovision due to surgery or contact lenses, you may not meet the vision screening standard.

DMV Evaluates Your Vision and considers:

- The severity of your vision condition.
- How your vision condition affects your central and side vision.
- If your vision condition affects one or both eyes.
- Whether your condition is correctable by glasses, contact lenses, or surgery.
- Whether your vision condition will get worse.

Vision Referral occurs when your vision does not meet DMV's screening standard. You are given a Report of Vision Examination for your eye doctor to complete. When you return with the form, your vision will be retested. If you still do not meet the vision screening standard, you **must** pass a behind-the-wheel drive test to demonstrate you compensate for your vision loss and drive safely. However, your DL may be restricted. Common restrictions include "Restricted to wearing corrective lenses" or "Restricted to driving during daylight hours only." DMV considers your vision condition, driving needs, and eye doctor's recommendation when issuing a full 5-year or limited 1 or 2-year term DL. If your vision condition is stable or will not impact your unaffected eye, you may not need the vision referral process for your next DL renewal.

Resources to Help You Prepare for Changes in Your Driving Skills

Occupational Therapists (OTs) can evaluate your driving to recommend aids, strategies, and training to improve your overall health, well-being, and driving safety. OTs are trained in driver evaluation and rehabilitation. They understand the complex demands and skills necessary to drive safely. During an **in-office** evaluation, the OT will test your:

- Reaction time needed for stopping fast enough to avoid a crash.
- Visual acuity or sharpness of vision.
- Decision making needed for handling turns or planning your driving trip.

During a **behind-the-wheel** evaluation, the OT will identify your driving strengths, weaknesses, and ways to keep you driving safely, including equipment, such as:

- Wide angle mirror
- Seat cushion
- Hand controls

For more information, visit blink.ucsd.edu/safety/risk/insurance/vehicle/accident-prevention.html.

Occupational Therapist Locator: eldersafety.org/resources/occupational_therapist_locator.html

Mature Driver Improvement Courses provide instruction on defensive driving and traffic laws as well as information on the effects that medication, fatigue, alcohol, and visual or auditory limitations have on driving ability.

For more information, visit dmv.ca.gov/portal/mature-driver-improvement-program or call 1-800-777-0133.

AARP Driver Safety Course completion helps lower risks of traffic violations, collisions, and injury.

Check with your insurance company to see if you qualify for a discount. For more information, visit aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/driver_safety or call 1-888-227-7669.

CarFit is a program by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), and American Automobile Association (AAA) to improve drivers' car fit. The 12-point CarFit checklist helps you adjust your vehicle fit for maximum comfort and safety. This includes finding the right distance between your chest and steering wheel, and correct line of vision above the steering wheel. For more information, visit car-fit.org (see Events) or call AARP Driver Safety Program at 1-888-227-7669.

AAA – For senior driver safety and mobility, visit exchange.aaa.com/safety/senior-driver-safety-mobility or call 1-800-637-2122.