

The Victorian Older Drivers' Handbook



7th Edition – November 2010



Travel Information at a glance

Older drivers can take advantage of a diverse range of transport alternatives.
The following contact details may be of assistance. See pages 81-97 for more information.

VicRoads – 13 11 71

Licensing, registration
and road rules information

1300 360 745

Road safety
information service

03 9854 2782

Bookshop



Seniors Card

1300 797 210

Reduced fares on
designated public
transport services



Seniors Information

Victoria

1300 135 090

Advice and
information
for senior Victorians



Metlink

13 16 38

Metropolitan Melbourne
train, tram and bus
information



VLine

8608 5011

Regional train and
coach information
and bookings



Multi-purpose taxi program

1800 638 802

Discounted taxi fares
for disabled people

1800 638 802

calls outside Melbourne



The Victorian Older Drivers' Handbook



The contribution of the following groups in the production of this publication is greatly appreciated: Alzheimers Australia Victoria, Australian Physiotherapists Association, Country Women's Association, Diabetes Australia, COTA National Seniors, Epilepsy Foundation, Fildes Pty Ltd, Gowan and Associates, Hawthorn Community Education Centre, Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians, North West Melbourne Division of General Practice, OT Australia (Vic), Office of Senior Victorians, Optometrists Association Australia, Pan Pacific Research, RACV, RSL, The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, The Road Safety Council (WA), Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, and Vision Australia.

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Introduction

About this book

This book is for you if you are an older driver and want to continue driving safely and be alert to changes that may make it unsafe for you to drive.

This information can help you understand the changes which may occur as a result of growing older. Along with other aspects of your lifestyle, this information is important when considering your current and future driving needs.

Topics include your legal obligations, medical conditions that affect driving, medicines, safe driving practices, good health and driving, and planning to stay mobile.

The information and advice contained in this book will help you to continue driving safely as you get older. Victoria does not require a driver to pass a licence test when they reach a certain age e.g. 65 or 70.

However, there may come a time when it will be necessary for you to reduce or cease driving. When considering whether to reduce or cease driving, the advice of your doctor and other health professionals is very important.

As a responsible driver, you will also listen if your spouse, relatives or friends are concerned about your driving.



The good news and bad news

The good news

Older drivers are involved in fewer crashes than other age groups. They tend to drive shorter distances and restrict their driving to times and situations in which they feel safe. Older drivers tend to be cautious and responsible, obey the law and are rarely involved in drink driving or speeding.



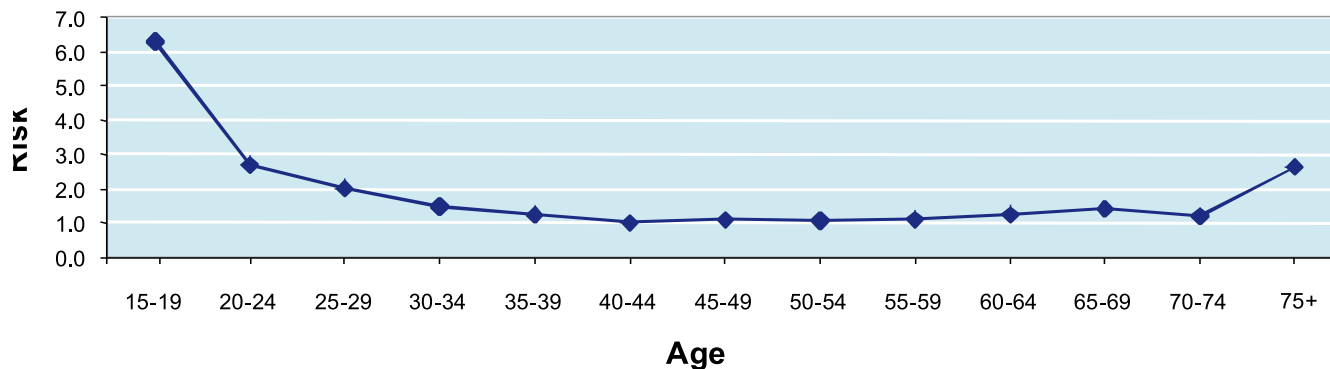
The bad news

The graph on page 3 shows the risk of being injured or killed in a crash, for each age group.

While older drivers don't have as many crashes, they and their older passengers, if involved in a crash, are more at risk of being seriously injured or killed. This is because they are frailer than younger people.

Illness and physical changes that are more common with ageing increase the risk of older drivers being involved in a crash. These changes may be to vision, memory and thinking.

Research shows that older people are more likely to be involved in collisions at intersections and on multi-lane roads. Failure to select a safe gap in the traffic is a major contributing factor. Selecting a safe gap is about judging the speed of other vehicles and their distance from you to determine if you have sufficient time to proceed safely. This is particularly important when entering the flow of traffic, driving through an intersection, completing a turn or overtaking another vehicle.



Relative risk of injury or death in a crash, adjusted for distance travelled

What this booklet is about

Section 1 contains a questionnaire that will help you to assess your own driving and to identify possible problems. It also explains your obligations as a licence holder and Victoria's licensing system.

Other sections contain information on health issues, medicines, practical hints for safe driving, and planning for when it may be necessary to reduce or cease driving.

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Driving skills, legal obligations and licensing

The following checklist has been included to encourage you to think about your driving, and to find ways in which it might be improved. It is also important that you understand your legal obligations in relation to driving, Victoria's licensing system and what is involved in having a driver assessment.

We have phrased the questions in the checklist so that they point towards possible problems. In all likelihood, you will not be experiencing many of the problems but it is important you being aware of, and monitoring them.

There are several ways in which you might wish to use the checklist. Simply read through it in private and spend a bit of time thinking about the possible problems, or fill it out, and see how well you do. You may also wish to have someone else familiar with your driving, fill it out and discuss the answers. The best person to do this might be your spouse or someone who is regularly a passenger.



A checklist to identify possible driving problems

Answer 'No' to each question only if it is either never, or very rarely true. Otherwise answer 'Yes'.

		Driver		Passenger		Refer to part (page)
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
General health						
1	When driving, do you find it difficult to turn your head to see over your shoulder?					2(29), 4(40)
2	Do any of your joints ache after you have been driving for an hour or more?					2(29), 4(47) 5(74–75)
3	Do you find it difficult to change your visual focus from the road ahead of you to the instrument panel or vice-versa?					2(22)
4	Do you find it harder to see at twilight than you used to?					2(22)
5	Do you have trouble seeing pedestrians stepping off the pavement while you are concentrating on the road ahead?					2(23–24) 2(24–26)
6	Do you have trouble telling how far away objects are?					2(24–25)
7	Is glare affecting you more than it used to?					2(22–24)
8	Do you have more difficulty driving at night than you used to?					2(22–24)
Subtotal						

		Driver		Passenger		Refer to part (page)
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
9	Do you suffer from a chronic medical condition such as epilepsy, diabetes, dementia or heart disease?					1(10) 2(28–31)
10	Has your doctor suggested that your medical condition might affect your driving?					1(10)
11	Has your optometrist or ophthalmologist suggested that changes in your vision might affect your driving?					1(10)
12	Do you get more tired than you used to, even when driving your normal routes?					4(47), 5(78)
13	Do you often get sleepy while driving during the day?					5(78)
14	Do you have trouble maintaining concentration while driving?					2(29), 5(78)
Medicines						
15	When you buy a new medicine, do you sometimes forget to check with your doctor or pharmacist about its possible effects on your driving?					3(34–36)
16	Do you sometimes fail to look for warning labels on your medicines?					3(34)
17	If you are taking medicine do you ever forget to ask your doctor or pharmacist if it's okay to have alcohol?					3(34–35) 5(76–77)
Subtotal						

		Driver		Passenger		Refer to part (page)
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Driving practice						
18	Do major intersections worry you because you have to make too many decisions at once?					4(40–41) 4(48)
19	Are you slower in reacting to complex driving situations than you used to be?					4(40–41)
20	Do traffic situations such as heavy traffic or turning at intersections make you more anxious or nervous than they used to?					4(40–41)
21	Are you uncertain about how to use a roundabout?					4(50–52)
22	Are you ever confused about who to give way to at intersections?					4(53–54)
23	Do you experience any difficulties changing lanes or merging with moving traffic?					4(40–42)
24	Do you feel the need to drive well below the speed limit?					4(45)
25	Have you failed to keep up-to-date with road rule changes?					4(49–55)
Subtotal						

		Driver		Passenger		Refer to part (page)
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Planning for change						
26	Have you had an increase in minor crashes or near misses recently?					6(81–92)
27	Do your family members, friends or doctor have concerns about your driving?					1(10–11) 2(17)
28	Does your family restrict you when you drive and with whom you can drive?					1(11)
Subtotal						
Total						

If you answered 'Yes' to six or more questions, you should speak to your doctor about safe driving.

You probably realised as you were working through the questions that the answers to some of them are much more important to safe driving than others.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any of your medical conditions or medicines may affect your driving.

In some cases it might be a good idea to have your driving ability professionally assessed by a driving instructor or an occupational therapist who specialises in driver assessment.

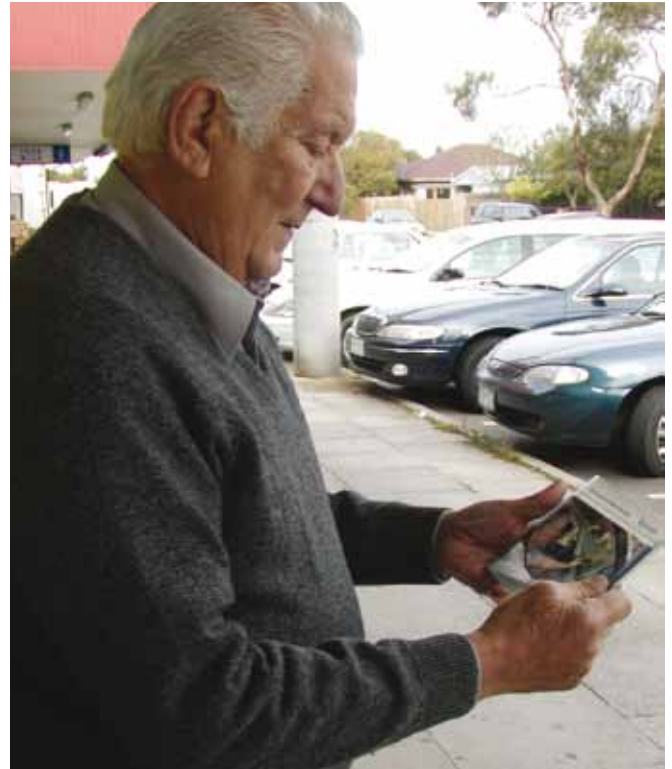
Your legal obligations

Driving is a privilege, which brings responsibilities. One of those responsibilities is to ensure that you are capable of driving safely. The best way of meeting this responsibility is to ask your doctor for advice about the effect that any illness or health related issue may have on your ability to drive safely.

While some people deal with the notion that they may not always be able to drive, and plan accordingly, there may be some people who fail to recognise, or choose to deny the signs.

A condition of being licensed to drive is that all motorists are required to advise VicRoads of any permanent or long term injury or illness that may impair their ability to drive safely. Ask your doctor whether your medical condition is one that needs to be reported to VicRoads. If so, VicRoads may require a medical report from your doctor.

Failure to report a condition may put your life and the lives of others at risk, and may also put your insurance cover at risk.



Reporting drivers who may be at risk

If the police or a member of the public is concerned about someone's ability to drive safely, they can notify VicRoads. If reported, that person may be asked to undergo a licence test if medical opinion suggests a test is appropriate, or if police have stated their concerns about safe driving.

People who suffer from dementia or conditions that affect clear thinking may not be able to make a judgement about the safety of their driving.

If you are concerned about a person's driving ability, give them your honest opinion and encourage them to discuss it with their doctor and to get an independent assessment. If you help them to reduce or cease their driving, you may be saving their life and the lives of others.

If the affected driver does not take your advice and you have real concerns, you should seriously consider making a report to VicRoads.

If you make a report in good faith you are protected from legal action.

Reports must be made in writing, but you can remain anonymous. Even if you provide your name, VicRoads will not reveal it to the driver.

Reports can be sent to:

VicRoads Medical Review

PO Box 2504

Kew 3101

For more information: (03) 9854 2407.

Licensing

Ageing does not necessarily mean that you are no longer a safe driver. In Victoria, you can drive to any age as long as you are safe to do so. There is no age-based assessment for licence renewal. Three year and 10 year licences are available. If you are under age 75, you will be offered a 10 year licence. You may, however, request a three year licence at any age.

Three year licences

Older drivers are at increased risk of serious injury because ageing increases frailty. Three year licences for drivers aged 75 years and over have been introduced to encourage these drivers to voluntarily assess their fitness to drive on a regular basis. There is no testing for the issue of these licences and there will be no additional cost.

If you are 75 years or older and you have a 10 year licence you will be able to retain it until it expires. The next time your licence is due for renewal you will be offered a three year licence.

A conditional licence

To help maintain your mobility, you may be offered a conditional licence. A conditional licence can mean the difference between surrendering your licence completely, or continuing to drive in circumstances that you find comfortable. These licences put a condition or restriction on your driving. Examples of driving restrictions include:

- only driving in daylight or in off-peak hours
- driving within a set radius from home
- driving between home, shops and medical centre only
- driving a vehicle with modifications.

It is important to remember that you must comply with the restriction on your licence. If not, you may be prosecuted.

Driver assessment

What happens to my licence if I am asked to have a test?

Victorian Government policy is to keep you driving – as long as you can do so safely. You may be asked by VicRoads to provide a medical report, or have a Review Driving Test or an Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment. VicRoads will look at the reports of the people who test you. If the reports show that you can drive safely, your licence will stay the same as before. If the reports show some problems with your driving, VicRoads will first consider a conditional licence. Only if your driving is considered to be unsafe will your licence be suspended or cancelled.

A Review Driving Test

The Review Driving Test has been specially designed to assess the ability to drive of experienced drivers who have been reported to VicRoads. You will only fail if your driving is unsafe or illegal.

You will be tested in a VicRoads car with dual controls to enable the tester to take control if necessary. The test will usually commence from your home and you will be asked to drive to the places where you typically go. It may take between 15 and 45 minutes, depending on whether you want a conditional licence or an unconditional licence.

You are allowed three attempts to pass your Review Driving Test. If you pass your test you will retain your licence. If you fail, VicRoads may issue you with a conditional driver licence. This will enable you to drive a dual control car accompanied by a suitable qualified driving instructor or assessor for the purposes of instruction (i.e. lessons) or assessment. This conditional licence cannot be used for solo driving or other types of accompanied driving.

For full details of a Review Driving Test, including how to prepare for it, refer to VicRoads information bulletin Your Review Driving Test available from the VicRoads Bookshop (03) 9854 2782 and Customer Service Centres **13 17 11**.

The role of occupational therapists

In Victoria, occupational therapists who specialise in driver assessment conduct driving tests for people who have a disability or a medical condition that could affect their driving.

A hospital may refer you to an occupational therapist after you have been in hospital for a serious medical condition. VicRoads may also request that you have a driving assessment with an occupational therapist if there is doubt about whether your disability or medical condition is affecting your driving. An assessment may be necessary to determine if a physical injury, illness, visual problem, disability, stroke or psychiatric disorder has affected your ability to drive safely.

You may also ask your doctor to refer you to an occupational therapist if you have doubts about your own driving safety.

You can find your nearest occupational therapist by contacting OT AUSTRALIA (Vic) **(03) 9481 6866**.

Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment

An assessment with an occupational therapist may be necessary if your physical or mental skills may have slowed over the years, or you may have a disability or a medical condition and would like to know if you are able to continue driving safely.

Prior to assessment you will be asked to provide a medical report from your doctor or medical specialist that shows you are medically fit to drive. The Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment involves both on-road and off-road tests.

During the off-road assessment, the occupational therapist will ask you about your lifestyle and driving, as well as your medical history. Your physical, visual, sensory and thinking abilities, such as planning and concentration, and your knowledge of the road law, will also be assessed.

The on-road test will occur in a dual controlled car, with the occupational therapist and a driving instructor present. The occupational therapist will observe your driving performance and will provide you with feedback.

The feedback will explain the effect of any physical limitations on your driving, your judgement and response to hazards, your ability to adjust to different traffic situations, your observation skills, and how you abide by road laws. If your assessment is satisfactory the occupational therapist will recommend that you resume driving unconditionally, or with modifications to your car and/or some restrictions to your driving. If it is unsafe for you to drive, VicRoads may issue you with a conditional driver licence. This will enable you to drive a dual control car accompanied by a suitable qualified driving instructor or assessor for the purposes of instruction (i.e. lessons) or assessment. This conditional licence cannot be used for solo driving or other types of accompanied driving. You may be asked to take lessons or to familiarise yourself with adaptive driving equipment. You may also be asked to wait for further recovery or improvement to occur. However, you may be found not safe to continue or to resume driving. Licence holders are required to cover the costs of their Occupational Therapy Driver Assessments.

For full details of an Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment, refer to VicRoads publication Guide to Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment available from the VicRoads Bookshop (03) 9854 2782 and Customer Service Centres 13 11 71.

Impact of test results on driver's licence

As the result of a Review Driving Test or an Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment, VicRoads may change your licence status. If VicRoads withdraws or puts a restriction on your licence, you will be advised by letter.

What if I don't agree with VicRoads' decision?

The letter from VicRoads will tell you how to have the decision reviewed. The first step is to write to VicRoads asking for a review of the decision to change your licence status. If VicRoads does not alter its decision you may appeal to a Magistrates' Court.

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Medical conditions

Driving safely requires clear vision, physical coordination, mental alertness and quick reactions.

Even though physical and mental changes that become more prevalent with age can eventually affect your ability to drive safely, there is no specific age at which these changes may occur. Therefore, you need to monitor and control any physical, visual or mental condition to ensure you can continue to drive safely.

Your doctor should be checking you regularly, particularly if there are signs that you are not functioning as well as you used to. Your doctor also needs to know that you drive, and can advise you if you have a condition that can affect driving and if that condition needs to be reported to VicRoads. If you drive a commercial vehicle such as a heavy vehicle or public passenger vehicle, the medical standards for driving are more stringent than for private vehicle drivers.

If you have a partner, be sure that they do enough of the driving to remain confident. One day your partner might have to do all of the driving.



Vision

Your vision changes as a natural part of ageing. You may also experience eye diseases, such as cataracts or glaucoma. As good vision is essential for safe driving, these changes can affect your ability to drive.

- Your ability to change the focus of the eyes decreases, so it becomes more difficult to focus from distant to near objects and back again.
- You need more light to see well.
- Cataracts can interfere with your ability to distinguish colours and cause sensitivity to glare.
- Diseases such as glaucoma can reduce the ability to see objects to the side.
- Conditions like diabetes and stroke can reduce vision, sometimes without us knowing.
- Your ability to judge distances can be affected.

Vision and driving

Good vision is essential for safe driving. You need to be able to identify hazards such as pedestrians, other vehicles or objects on the road, as well as being able to read road signs. You must also be able to identify coloured signals, such as traffic lights.



Good night vision is needed to see in low light and also to recover quickly from the glare of oncoming lights. Night vision typically deteriorates gradually from about the age of 40.

What you need for safe driving are good visual acuity, peripheral vision and depth perception.

Visual acuity

Visual acuity is the technical term used to describe the sharpness of your vision. It is measured by how well you can read the smallest row of letters on a standard eye chart.

The legal limit for holding a private driver licence is visual acuity of "6/12" or better (using both eyes). Normal visual acuity is usually regarded as being "6/6". This is also referred to as "20/20", as the standard test distance is 6 metres or 20 feet. The letters on the 6/12 line on an eye chart are twice as large as those on the 6/6 line.

The only way to know if you have adequate visual acuity is to have a professional eye test.

- If you need to wear glasses or contact lenses to read the minimum 6/12 line, a condition will be imposed on your licence that will require you to wear corrective lenses whenever you are driving.

If you drive a commercial vehicle, the vision standards for driving are more stringent than for private drivers.



Distance acuity is the ability to focus on a distant object such as this STOP sign.

Peripheral vision

Peripheral vision or side vision is your ability to see objects off to the sides of the object you are looking at. This is important for safe driving as it allows you to spot vehicles in other lanes while you are looking directly ahead.



Peripheral vision describes the ability to see out of the corner of your eye. It enables a driver to see to the side without looking away from the road ahead. A driver with poor peripheral vision may not see this pedestrian on the roadside.

To hold a driver licence you need to be able to see objects in an area extending at least 120 degrees horizontally and 10 degrees above and below the point at which you are looking. Most people can normally see objects in a much larger area than this.

Depth perception

Depth perception is a very important skill for safe driving. It is essential for being able to judge how far away other vehicles are, particularly at intersections. It is often more difficult to judge the distance of smaller vehicles, such as bicycles and motorcycles, so you should always take extra care when driving near these vehicles.

Colour vision

Colour vision problems can cause difficulties for drivers. People with red/green colour defects can sometimes have difficulty recognising traffic lights quickly, and others will be slower to react to red signals, such as brake lights.

Colour vision defects are usually hereditary, and occur in about eight per cent of men and 0.5 per cent of women. Some eye diseases can also cause colour vision defects.



Depth perception gives us the ability to judge the gap between moving vehicles.

If you have a colour vision defect you should be aware that it may affect your ability to quickly recognise coloured signals. So, take precautions, such as leaving a larger gap between yourself and the vehicle in front of you.

Regular eye examinations

Recent studies have found that there are more than 480,000 people aged over 40 in Australia whose vision is currently too poor for them to drive legally. Over three-quarters of these people could have their vision corrected easily with a pair of glasses. Most of the others have eye diseases that need to be treated to prevent further vision loss.

Optometrists Association Australia recommends older Australians have their eyes tested at least every two years. If your optometrist or ophthalmologist recommends more frequent testing, you follow their recommendations. You should make an appointment to see an optometrist or doctor for an eye test if you notice any changes in your vision.

Eye diseases

Your risk of developing eye diseases increases with age. The risk of serious eye disease increases three times for every decade over the age of 40. Most eye diseases do not have obvious symptoms in their early stages, which means they can go undetected until they reach an advanced stage.

The earlier an eye disease is detected, the better, so regular eye examinations become even more important as we get older.

Some of the common eye diseases that can affect the ability to drive are cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetes.

Cataracts

Cataracts are a clouding of the eye's lens. They have many causes, but the most common cause is ageing.

The cloudiness in the lens makes vision blurry and can cause sensitivity to glare and bright lights. This is particularly noticeable when driving at night.

Cataracts can also make it difficult to distinguish objects against some backgrounds.

Cataracts are treated by surgery to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with a clear plastic lens. Your optometrist or ophthalmologist can advise you on whether surgery is necessary.



With cataracts, the whole view may be cloudy. It is also harder to see at night or when there is glare.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a disease that damages the optic nerves that carry signals from your eyes to your brain. This results in a gradual loss of vision, starting with peripheral (side, top and/or bottom) vision and progressing until all vision may be lost. Treatment can prevent further vision loss, but needs to be commenced as early as possible.



With glaucoma, the extent you can see to the sides, top and/or bottom will decrease unless you get early treatment.

Regular eye examinations are extremely important, as many people who have glaucoma may not realise they have it until they have lost most of their vision.

Macular degeneration

Macular Degeneration (MD) is the leading cause of blindness and severe vision loss in Australia.



Macular degeneration results in areas where you can see nothing.

One in seven people over 50 are affected by the disease. MD leads to a breakdown of the centre of the retina (known as the macula). It can lead to losing central vision which means you can look directly at objects but not see them. All you would see is a dark blob. You would only be able to see objects by looking to one side of them. There are three major risk factors for MD: age, smoking and family history. Treatment depends on the stage and type of the disease. Current treatments aim to keep the best vision for as long as possible and in some cases may potentially provide visual improvement, but there is presently no cure. Early detection is vital in saving your sight.

Minimum vision standards needed to hold a licence

The table opposite outlines the minimum vision standards to hold a driver licence for a car, motorcycle, light truck or boat, and those required to hold a driver licence for a bus or a truck.

Diabetes

It is important to have regular medical checkups from your doctor, because it is possible to have diabetes and not be aware of it. Left untreated, diabetes can cause vision problems by damaging the blood vessels in the retina, which can lead to blindness. Other side effects of diabetes include nerve damage in your legs and/or heart problems.

Vision problems associated with diabetes can develop suddenly and affect driving. It is important to make an appointment to see an optometrist or doctor for an eye test if you notice any sudden changes in your vision.

If you have diabetes you should have your eyes examined by an eye health professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist) at least every two years, so that any damage can be detected and treated immediately. Your optometrist or ophthalmologist may recommend more frequent testing if required.

Visual condition	Licence for car, motorcycle, light truck and boat	Licence for bus and truck
Acuity (clarity of vision) Visual acuity can be tested by optometrist or eye specialist	The minimum requirement for holding a private driver licence is visual acuity of "6/12" or better (using both eyes). Aided or unaided vision is acceptable.	Corrected (with glasses or contact lenses) or uncorrected visual acuity must be better than 6/9 in the best eye and at least 6/18 in the worst eye.
Cataracts	Must meet all visual criteria. Two yearly review required.	At minimum, visual acuity must be met.
Glaucoma	May drive if visual acuity and visual field standards are met. May be subject to annual review of vision and visual fields.	Standards for visual fields must be met. If considered suitable, a licence may be considered subject to annual review of visual fields.
Loss of vision in one eye	Should not drive for three months after losing vision in one eye. May then drive if vision in good eye meets visual acuity standards.	May drive if the visual acuity standards are met.
Poor night vision	A conditional licence may be issued for daylight driving.	A conditional licence may be issued for daylight driving.

As well as affecting your vision, diabetes can also cause you to lose consciousness from a hypoglycaemic episode. Ask your doctor, diabetes educator, Diabetes Australia or VicRoads Medical Review staff what steps can be taken to prevent hypoglycaemia whilst driving.

If you hold a current driver licence, you are required by law to notify VicRoads if you have, or develop, any serious or chronic medical condition like diabetes. You need to inform VicRoads about your diabetes whether it is controlled by insulin, medication, or diet and exercise. If your diabetes is controlled by diet and exercise you should be fine to drive just like anyone else. However, if your diabetes is not under control, you should not drive until medically cleared as fit to drive by your doctor and VicRoads.

It is important that you have regular medical checkups from your doctor to make sure your diabetes stays under control and to prevent where possible side effects. These may include impaired vision, nerve damage in your legs or heart problems.

Make sure your doctor knows that you drive so you can get appropriate advice.

To retain your licence you must provide a medical report to VicRoads on request. For private vehicle drivers this is every five years if you have type 2 diabetes requiring medication, and every two years if you have type 1 or 2 diabetes controlled by insulin. Reviews are more frequent for commercial vehicle drivers.



Untreated diabetes can result in an eye condition where there are patches where you can't see.

Hearing

If you suffer from a loss of hearing it is probably still safe for you to drive. To be certain, consult your doctor about how and where to drive.

If you use hearing aides be sure to wear them when you drive. Have your hearing checked regularly to make sure your aides still provide the best amplification for you.

Occasionally hearing loss can be accompanied by other problems such as keeping balance. Loss of balance can be a real problem for drivers. If you have balance problems, consult your doctor about your driving.

Other medical conditions

There are a number of other physical and neurological conditions that may affect your ability to drive safely. Physical conditions generally affect your strength and range of movement. Neurological conditions may also affect these capacities, as well as judgement and decision making when driving.

It is important for safety reasons that your condition is stable and controlled – always check with your doctor or specialist about driving. In some cases an Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment may be required.

You must notify VicRoads if you have any of the conditions listed below.

Seizures

If you suffer from epilepsy or seizures you will need to consult your doctor or specialist as to whether you should be driving. Your condition will also need to be monitored on a regular basis.

Heart disease

If you have a heart condition that is stable and well controlled, you may be fine to drive.

Always check with your doctor or specialist first.

Arthritic conditions

Arthritic conditions causing pain, reduced mobility or neurological impairment may affect the ability to drive. The opinion of your doctor is recommended.

Parkinson's disease

Many people with Parkinson's disease can drive safely for a number of years. However, deteriorating ability may make it unsafe for someone to drive.

Stroke

If you've had a stroke, seek medical opinion and clearance before returning to driving.

An Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment may help a driver left with permanent disabilities to resume their driving with vehicle modifications.

Sleep apnoea

Sleep apnoea increases your chance of heart attack and stroke. It can lead to excessive daytime sleepiness, poor concentration and a higher risk of having a crash. Talk to your doctor about driving, if you have this condition.

Dementia

If you're worried about increasing lapses in memory, or other changes in thinking or behaviour, it is very important to talk to a doctor.

Sometimes stress, depression, pain or other medical conditions can be mistaken for Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. That's why getting a diagnosis is important. If dementia is confirmed, it is important to discuss with your doctor how this will affect your ability to drive.

Multiple sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis can cause physical, thinking and memory problems that may affect your ability to drive. These problems may include weakness, numbness, poor coordination, fatigue, and slowed thinking and problem solving ability. You may also experience problems with your vision. These problems might come and go without warning. It is important to discuss any problems with your doctor to ensure that you are safe to drive.

People with Parkinson's disease, stroke, dementia or multiple sclerosis are usually required to have their driving assessed by an occupational therapist.

Reduced flexibility

You may not be as flexible as you used to be. Perhaps you have difficulty turning your head to check for other cars. Maybe it's hard to get comfortable when your seatbelt is fastened. Speak with your doctor about these problems.

Also check the distance of the seat from the pedals, the seat height and the angle of the back of the seat. An occupational therapist can help you to overcome difficulties with wearing your seatbelt, and many other problems associated with comfort and safe driving.

A physiotherapist may suggest some exercises to improve your flexibility.

Moderate exercise is a good way to keep in shape and people of all ages should make exercise a part of their daily routine.

Physical activity keeps the joints moving as well as helping to maximise bone density and maintain strength. It also assists with weight control and reduces the risk of heart attack. Exercise does not need to be vigorous for heart health, but it has to be regular. Walking is a very good exercise for many older people.

For optimal benefit, exercise should be performed frequently — every day for about 30 minutes. However, do not drastically change your exercise patterns until you have consulted your doctor.

Make sure your doctor knows you drive. Have regular medical check-ups, at least yearly, and more often if you have a condition that may get worse with time. If you have any concerns about your health and driving speak to your doctor, optometrist or specialist.

Further information

Alzheimer's Australia Victoria Dementia Helpline

1800 100 500
alzheimers.org.au

Arthritis Foundation of Victoria

(03) 8531 8000
arthritisvic.org.au

Australian Physiotherapy Association

(03) 9092 0866
physiotherapy.asn.au

Carers Victoria

1800 242 636
carersaustralia.com.au

Chronic Illness Alliance

(03) 9805 9126

chronicillness.org.au

Diabetes Australia – Victoria

(03) 9667 1777 or 1300 136 588

diabetesvic.org.au

Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria

Information 1300 852 853

Main office (03) 9805 9111

epinet.org.au

Glaucoma Australia Inc

1800 500 880

Heart Foundation

Heartline Information Service 1300 362 787

heartfoundation.org.au

Macular Degeneration Foundation

1800 111 709

mdfoundation.com.au

Multiple Sclerosis Limited

1800 042 138

mssociety.org.au

Optometrists Association Victoria

(03) 9654 2122

vicoptom.asn.au

OT AUSTRALIA (Vic)

(Occupational Therapists Association)

(03) 9481 6866

otausvic.com.au

Victorian Deaf Society

(03) 9473 1111 or

TTY (03) 9473 1199

Vision problems

(Vision Information Line) (03) 9864 9550

Non-metro toll free 1800 331 000

visionaustralia.org.au

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Medicines

Warning signs

Research shows that some medicines can affect your driving ability.

Alcohol, taken in combination with a medicine, can make the effect even worse. This can happen with medicines prescribed by your doctor and some bought without a prescription. Ask your pharmacist about the effect that alcohol might have on any medicine you take.

Remember that many medicines can affect your mental alertness and coordination, which may impact on your abilities as a driver and a pedestrian. Always ask your doctor and your pharmacist whether any new medicine, or a changed dose of medicine you are already taking, including diabetes medication and insulin, may affect you as a driver or as a pedestrian.

Early symptoms of being affected by medicines include:


- drowsiness
- undue aggression
- dizziness
- nausea
- light-headedness
- blurred or double vision
- shakiness.



Labelling of medicines

Medicines may affect your driving. Look for the following warning labels on medicines:

1



This medicine may cause drowsiness and may increase the effects of alcohol.

If affected, do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery.

1a

This preparation is to aid sleep.

Drowsiness may continue the following day. If affected, do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery.

Avoid alcohol.

2

DO NOT TAKE ALCOHOL while being treated with this medicine.

12

This medicine may affect mental alertness and/or coordination. If affected, do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery.



DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES WHEN TAKING THIS MEDICATION

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Keep a list of all your medicines, prescribed or not, and show it to your doctor and pharmacist each time you see them. Ask your pharmacist to update the list when you have prescriptions filled and when you buy a non-prescription medicine.

Certain combinations of medicines, and some natural health remedies, can affect your driving ability. If you have a question about your medicines, ask your doctor or pharmacist immediately. Your pharmacist can also give you printed information on most medicines.

Questions for your pharmacist

You may wish to ask some of the following questions:

- How and when is the best way to use my medicine?
- What food, drinks, or activities should I avoid when taking my medicine?
- Will this medicine interact with any others I am currently taking?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of my medicine?
- How do I best store this medicine?
- Taking this medicine causes problems with my sight/strength/swallowing/memory – what advice can you give me?
- Are there any side effects that may affect my driving?
- Is there anything else I should know about my medicine?
- Should I have a Home Medicines Review?

Home Medicines Review

A Home Medicines Review can help you to manage your medicines at home. Your doctor will give you a referral to the pharmacy of your choice. The pharmacist will talk with you in your home and write a report for your doctor, who will discuss the recommendations with you. The Review can help you to understand more about managing your medical condition and more about your medication.

The pharmacist's fee is paid by the Federal Government and the Review will be free if your doctor bulk bills. For further information on the Review, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.

To drive safely

- Read your medicine labels carefully and obey the directions and warnings – they are there for your protection.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if a medicine will affect your driving, and if it does, ask for one that doesn't.
- Take public transport, a taxi, or ask a friend or relative to drive if you are likely to be affected by medicines.
- Take your medicine exactly as directed.

To avoid a dangerous driving situation

Tell your doctor that you drive. Remind your doctor that you drive whenever a new medicine is prescribed or a dosage is changed. If a new medicine or a different dosage affects you, ask your doctor and pharmacist if an alternative medicine can be used that lets you drive safely.

Remember:

- Avoid driving if you feel that medicines or illness are affecting your driving. Other medicines can often be used instead, so consult your doctor.
- Be especially careful when starting to a new medicine or an increased dose.
- Avoid taking alcohol and medicine at the same time.
- Avoid taking more than your prescribed dose.
- Never use other people's medicine.
- Avoid driving if you have missed a dose of your prescribed medicine; your condition could make your driving dangerous.
- Don't allow any condition to go untreated.

Medicines Line

Tel 1300 633 424

Medicines Line gives you confidential information on prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as herbal and natural therapies. Medicines Line is not an emergency service and it does not replace advice from your doctor or pharmacist.

You can call Medicines Line on **1300 633 424** between 9am and 6pm Monday to Friday and ask a qualified pharmacist about:

- how your medicine works
- doses and how to take your medicine
- side effects and interactions with other medicines
- storage of medicines.

Random roadside drug testing

The Victorian Government has introduced random roadside saliva testing for some illegal drugs. If you are stopped by police for a random drug test, and asked to provide a saliva sample, there is no cause for concern. The test will not detect legally prescribed medicines. As with breath testing to detect alcohol, you must not refuse to provide a saliva sample if requested by police.

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Safe driving practices

Safe driving is a state of mind – be alert for the unexpected and ready to take evasive action.

By paying attention and looking out for potential problems, you can avoid crashes that result from your mistakes or those of others. For example, when approaching a stopped school bus be aware that a child may run out from behind or in front of the bus at any time. Be prepared to take action.

At any age, it is important to be alert when driving.

Some tips for safe driving:

- Avoid potentially dangerous road and traffic conditions, particularly if your reaction times have slowed down.
- Plan to drive when there is less traffic and avoid driving in the wet or in poor light.

- Be especially alert to what other road users are doing and avoid distractions.
- Don't allow passengers to distract you from the driving task and make certain that any devices such as heaters or radios are selected and adjusted appropriately before you start driving.



Driving safely

Knowing what is happening around you

Glancing regularly in the rear and side vision mirrors enables you to know what is occurring behind and beside your vehicle. This is very important, especially for overtaking and changing lanes.



A head check is essential for seeing vehicles, pedestrians or other objects in the blind spots.

Head check

However, mirrors don't really show you everything behind and beside you – there are blind spots and you may not be able to see a small vehicle like a motorcycle or bicycle. You need to be able to do a head check by turning your head to the left or right and quickly looking over your shoulder to make sure that the space you are about to move into is not occupied. Turning from the waist to do a head check, instead of just turning your head will make it easier to see traffic. Even when you are getting into or out of your car, you must not cause a hazard for any person or vehicle when opening your door. That's why a head check is essential – it can be a life saver.

Intersections

As older people are more likely to be involved in collisions at intersections, plan your trips to use intersections with traffic lights. Traffic lights with green arrows are even better. Intersections with STOP or GIVE WAY signs are a better choice than intersections with no signs.

Try to find roads with less traffic. If possible choose a route where you can do left turns instead of right turns.

At intersections, always look right and left, then right again, to make sure that it is all clear to go. Do this even where there are signs and traffic lights. Take the time to look for any vehicles and to judge their distance from you.



Only cross into another lane when there is a safe gap.

Many crashes occur because drivers do not follow this basic driving practice.

Peripheral vision can decrease with age so to compensate, turn your head more. If there is any doubt about how far away a car is, don't proceed until it has passed. If the driver behind is sounding the horn, don't be bullied into moving off until you are satisfied that it's safe.

Driving in heavy traffic

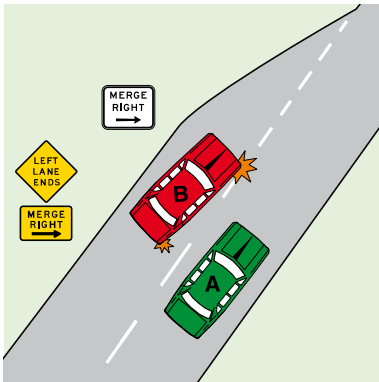
Driving during peak hours or on busy roads is not much fun for anyone. Plan your trip so that, on the roads you choose, traffic is light and you have plenty of time to enjoy your trip.

Driving at night

Try to avoid it! If it is necessary to drive at night, do not drive at those times when you would normally be asleep. Keep the journey as short as possible and travel on familiar roads.

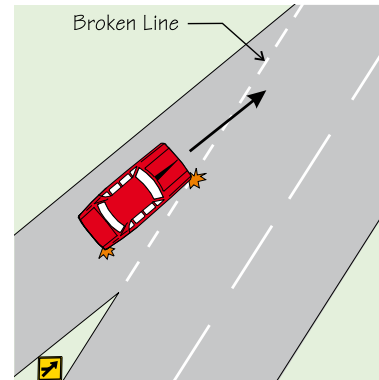
Merging with moving traffic

Common situations where you need to merge are when entering a freeway, or when the road narrows from two lanes to one. A problem with merging is being able to see traffic that is behind you in the lane you want to enter. You will need to do a head check, which allows you to see what traffic is coming behind. Remember to cross into another lane only when there is a safe gap, and make sure that you are travelling at the same speed as the moving traffic when you join it.



Merging onto a freeway

After doing a head check, always use the full length of the merging lane on the freeway when you merge with the freeway. Only cross into another lane when you are certain there is a safe gap, and make sure that you are travelling at the same speed as the traffic when you join the freeway.



Rear vision mirrors

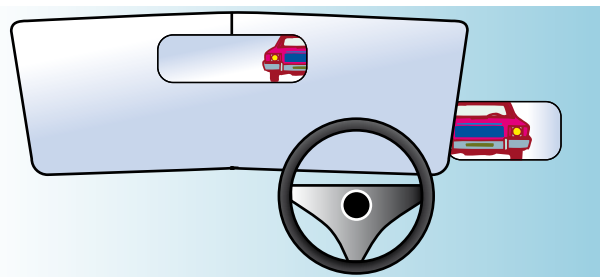
Before driving, adjust your mirrors after you have positioned the driver's seat. The outside mirrors should be adjusted so that they just catch a view of the edge of your car. As a guide, you should be able to just see the rear door handle in the bottom corner of the side mirrors.

When adjusted correctly there will be an overlap between the view from your inside and outside mirrors. However, regardless of how well you set up your mirrors, blind spots remain and you must remember to do a head check.

Glance regularly in the rear vision and side mirrors. By doing this you will be aware of what is occurring behind you. This is very important for overtaking and merging.



Adjust the mirrors after you have positioned the driver's seat.



There should be an overlap between the view from your driver's side mirror and your rear vision mirror.

Following distance

Often the ability to judge distance and speed deteriorates with age and older people may take longer to react. So, keep a safe distance from the car in front. Under normal conditions, on most roads and highways, you should try to have a two second gap between your car and the car in front where possible. In wet weather and at night, leave a bigger gap.

The way to work this out is to pick a solid object beside the road, such as a post. When the back end of the car in front reaches the object start counting 'one thousand and one, one thousand and two' – two seconds. The front of your car should not have reached this point until you have counted two seconds. If it has, you are too close.

Don't worry if someone else fills the gap. Move back again to maintain your two second gap.

The two second gap should be extended to four seconds in the following situations:

- At night or in poor light.
- Bad weather conditions such as rain or fog.
- When you are tired.
- When your vehicle is heavily laden and can't stop as quickly.
- When you are towing.
- When you are unsure of the road.

Daytime running lights

Research shows that using headlights on low beam during the daytime reduces the risk of a crash because you can be seen more readily by others. Many newer cars have daytime running lights that automatically switch on when the car is started. Remember that low beam headlights must also be used in hazardous weather conditions that cause reduced visibility.

The speed limit and driving

The speed limit is the maximum speed at which you may drive. Depending on traffic and environmental conditions, and familiarity with the road, you should drive at a speed that is safe for the conditions.

However, it's important not to travel too slowly as you may create a traffic hazard for other drivers.

Keep checking your rear vision mirror. If you notice a growing number of cars in the line behind you, you are probably going too slowly for other traffic.

Pull over to the side of the road as soon as it is safe to do so. When the line of cars has passed, you can resume your journey. Keep checking the mirror and you can't go wrong.

If there is more than one lane going in your direction, drive in the left lane so that other drivers can pass you if they wish.

School speed zones

Advance warning signs

Advance warning signs let you know that you are approaching a school zone with reduced speed limits. Be ready to slow down during school times.



50 km/h roads

Outside schools on 50 km/h roads, there are permanent 40 km/h speed limit zones. You must obey this 40 km/h speed limit at ALL times. In some special cases, such as 50 km/h roads with high traffic volumes, a time-based 40 km/h limit may be in place.



60 and 70 km/h roads

Outside schools on 60 and 70 km/h roads, a time-based 40 km/h speed limit is used. The 40 km/h speed limit is in effect from 8.00am to 9.30am, and from 2.30pm to 4.00 pm on school days.



The regular 60 or 70 km/h limit applies outside these times.

80, 90 and 100 km/h roads

Outside schools on 80, 90 and 100 km/h roads, a time-based 60 km/h speed limit applies from 8.00am to 9.30am, and from 2.30pm to 4.00pm on school days. The regular 80, 90, or 100 km/h limit applies outside these times.



40 km/h zones

Apart from school speed zones, 40 km/h speed limits may be used at the following locations:



Strip shopping centres – 40 km/h speed limits have been implemented in a number of busy strip shopping centres in metropolitan Melbourne, mainly to improve safety for pedestrians. In most cases, the 40 km/h speed limit applies only during the times when activity levels are high.

However, at some locations the lower limit is permanent.

Speed-limited areas

Speed limits may be applied to a network of roads within a defined area. The speed limit that applies is indicated by area speed limit signs that are installed at each point of entry and end area signs at exit points.

Where speed-limited areas are applied to local streets, a speed limit of 40 km/h is used. In car parks and recreational reserves / parks, a speed limit of either 30 km/h or 40 km/h is generally used.

Permanent 40 km/h speed limits have also been installed near schools on roads which otherwise have a speed limit of 50 km/h. These differ from school speed zones in that they are not time based and do not have "SCHOOL ZONE" inscribed on the signs.

Driving at night

Avoid driving at dusk or at night. Overnight driving can be dangerous on country roads which have no street lighting.

Long distance travel

Try to avoid it! However, if it is an important journey, plan it well in advance and where possible share the driving with your spouse or a friend. Rest well before you start the journey and plan for frequent rest periods; at least every two hours.



There are opportunities to rest at the many sites provided along Victoria's road network.

Consider how long the journey will take, your familiarity with the route and road conditions, the best time of day to travel, and good places to stop and take a break.

During each rest period you should be able to park the car safely, get out and stretch your legs and perhaps have some water and light refreshment. Keep each stage of your journey short enough for you to remain comfortable and alert.

Waiting to turn

When waiting to turn into a driveway, side street, or at an intersection have your wheels pointing straight ahead. This way if your car is hit in the rear you will go straight ahead. If you have your wheels turned, you are likely to go in that direction, perhaps into the path of an oncoming vehicle.

Road safety education sessions

From time to time, you will see free education sessions advertised in the local press. These courses will update you on road law, give you the chance to ask questions, and provide useful information about medical conditions, medicines and safe driving. You can telephone the numbers below to enquire when there will be a session in your area and to book your place. You can also arrange to hold one of these seminars for your own community group.

VicRoads *SafeDrive* Seminars (03) 9854 2612

RACV *Years Ahead* program (03) 9790 2915

**Hawthorn Community Education
Centre's *Wiser Driver* course** (03) 9819 5758

**Westgate RoadSafe Driver
Information Day** (03) 9315 9464

**TAC Community
Mobility Program** (03) 9479 5669

Road rules

Surveys show that older drivers can be unfamiliar with the meaning of new road rules and uncertain about how to respond to new traffic signs and road markings. Knowing the meaning of all road rules, signs and road markings is a requirement for holding a driver licence.



Driving in Victoria: rules and responsibilities is a guide that sets out various legal requirements for drivers. It is available for purchase from

VicRoads Bookshop and Customer Service Centres, and can be accessed on VicRoads website, vicroads.vic.gov.au

Some suggestions

Road rules change and so does signage. So there is a need to keep up-to-date.

Visit your local VicRoads Customer Service Centre, VicRoads Bookshop or RACV shop for information on road rule updates.

For many of us, it's a long time since we had any driving lessons. It's a good idea to have a driving assessment and a refresher course if necessary. Enquire if your selected driving instructor has a Level IV Certificate in older driver assessment.

Roundabouts

A roundabout is an intersection with a central traffic island, which you must drive around in a clockwise direction.

One lane roundabouts

Some roundabouts allow for only one lane of traffic. For these roundabouts, there are three simple rules:

- Enter a roundabout only when there is a safe gap in the traffic, giving way to traffic already in the roundabout.
- Drive around the roundabout until you reach your point of exit, using your left indicator just before leaving the roundabout.
- Never overtake another vehicle, bicycle or motorcycle on a single lane roundabout.

Multi-lane roundabouts

Other roundabouts allow for two (and sometimes more) lanes of traffic. It is these roundabouts which seem to cause the most confusion. However the same basic rules apply:

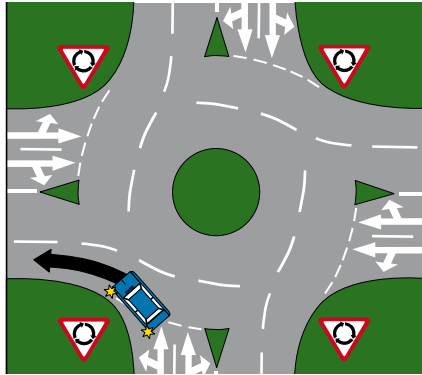
- Slow down as you approach and prepare to give way to all vehicles already in the roundabout.
- If you want to turn left, approach the roundabout in the left lane and stay in that lane. Indicate left as you enter the roundabout and keep the signal on until you exit.
- If you want to turn right, approach the roundabout in the right lane. Indicate right as you enter the roundabout, and stay in the right lane until you reach your point of exit. Use your left indicator as you exit.
- If you want to go straight ahead and unless the road markings say otherwise, approach the roundabout from either the left or right lanes. Stay in that lane through the roundabout and exit from the same lane. Use your left indicator as you exit.

Road markings

When arrow(s) are marked on the road before or in a roundabout, you must drive in the direction of the arrows.

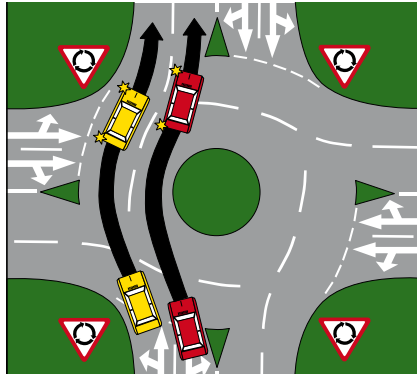
Turning left

- On approach signal left.
- Use the left lane.
- Follow the road markings.



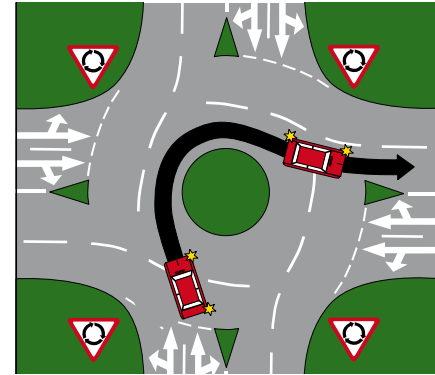
Going straight through

- Don't signal on approach.
- Use either lane, unless marked otherwise, and don't change lanes.
- Follow the road markings to exit.
- Signal left just before you exit the roundabout.



Turning right

- On approach, signal for right turn.
- Use the right lane.
- Follow the lane markings to exit.
- Signal left just before you exit the roundabout.



Remember to give way to all vehicles already in the roundabout

Roundabouts (cont.)

Some suggestions

In many ways a roundabout can be treated the same as any other intersection. If you want to turn left, be in the left lane. If you want to turn right, be in the right lane.

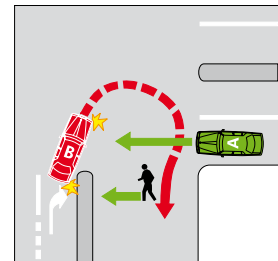
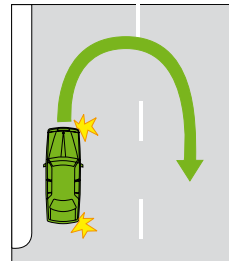
As a general rule, do not change lanes once you have entered the roundabout.

But always be on the lookout for special road markings or traffic signs and signals.

If you are still unsure about roundabouts, more information is available on the VicRoads website: vicroads.vic.gov.au or contact your nearest VicRoads Customer Service Centre **13 11 71**.

U-turns

When making a U-turn you must give way to all other vehicles and pedestrians. Before you begin a U-turn, do a head check to make sure there is no traffic behind you. When the road is clear of traffic and pedestrians in all directions, you can start your U-turn. When there is no median start your U-turn from the left side of the road. If you need to make a U-turn where a median strip is located, make your U-turn from the right turn lane.



Giving way

What 'Give Way' means

No person ever has "right of way". You have an obligation to "give way".

If there is a danger that you might collide with another vehicle or person, you must slow down and stop if necessary to avoid the collision. For example, if a driver at a GIVE WAY sign, a STOP sign or a red light does not give way, the other driver must slow down or stop to avoid a collision. If you have stopped you must remain stopped until it is safe to proceed.

Remember that trucks, buses, bicycles, motorcycles and horse riders have the same rights as cars and therefore expect you to give way.

When you must give way

The full set of give way rules is quite complex and detailed. Here is a simplified way to understand the term 'give way'.

You must give way when:

- there is a possibility that a collision may occur or a dangerous situation may arise, regardless of who should give way
- there are pedestrians on a pedestrian crossing or in a slip lane or crossing the road you are turning into
- there are pedestrians on a flagged children's crossing
- there are pedestrians in a shared zone
- a tram is stopped and pedestrians are crossing between the tram and the curb
- doing a U-turn
- pulling out from a parking spot
- entering or leaving a service road or driveway
- at a GIVE WAY or STOP sign

(cont'd)

When you must give way (cont.)

- you are at an uncontrolled intersection and there is a vehicle approaching or entering the intersection from your right
- approaching a T intersection and you are on the road that ends at the intersection
- you are moving into a new lane and there is traffic already in that lane
- police and emergency service vehicles using their lights and sirens approach your car, or are following you or crossing your path
- you are at a railway crossing with a GIVE WAY or a STOP sign or when bells and lights, or booms or gates are operating.

If you require more details about the give way rules, you can get up to date information from the VicRoads website: vicroads.vic.gov.au or from your nearest VicRoads Customer Service Centre **13 11 71**.

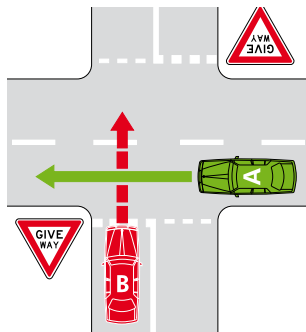
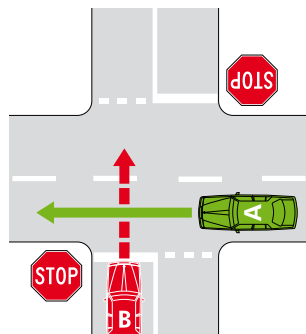
Signs

When a STOP sign or GIVE WAY sign is facing you

You must bring your vehicle to a complete stop before, but as close as possible to a STOP line. If there is no STOP line, you must stop before entering the intersection. You must slow down and stop if necessary at a GIVE WAY line. If there is no GIVE WAY line, you must slow down and stop if necessary before entering the intersection.

After stopping at a STOP sign or line, or when facing a GIVE WAY sign or line at an intersection, you must give way to any vehicle in, entering or approaching the intersection except:

- a vehicle making a U-turn
- a vehicle turning left using a slip lane
- an oncoming vehicle turning right if that vehicle is also facing a STOP or GIVE WAY sign or line.



After stopping at a STOP sign, or when facing a GIVE WAY sign, red vehicle B must give way to green vehicle A.

Safer cars

Buying a car

As older people are more susceptible to injury if involved in a crash, it is helpful to know about a number of features and accessories that make driving both safer and easier.

In general, buy a new car, or as close to new a car as you can afford. Safety regulations are now more stringent and many newer cars provide better occupant protection.

When selecting a car it is worthwhile checking its safety rating. The Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) measures how well a new car will protect its occupants by crashing new vehicles and measuring the impact on crash test dummies. The better the results, the less likely the occupants will be injured in a crash.

A star rating from 1 to 5 is assigned on the basis of crash test results – the more stars the better. For information see the ANCAP website.

The *Used Car Safety Ratings Buyers Guide* provides safety comparisons of used cars, based on statistics collected from real world crashes.

When buying a used car, ask the seller for a full and well-documented service history for the vehicle. If one is unavailable, buyer beware!

ANCAP brochures, the *Used Car Safety Ratings Buyers Guide* and the RACV's *Make the right choice: Vehicle safety advice for older drivers* are available from VicRoads and RACV shops. The website: ancap.com.au also provides useful vehicle safety information.

There are three types of vehicle features that can make driving much safer for you – safety features that will help you avoid a crash; those that help protect you if you have a crash; and those that can make driving more comfortable and minimise fatigue. It is important that your car has as many of these features as possible.



Features that help prevent crashes	
Electronic Stability Control (ESC)	ESC is an active safety system that reduces the risk of a driver losing control of the vehicle. Also known as Electronic Stability Program (ESP), ESC stabilises the vehicle when it deviates from the driver's steered direction.
ABS – Antilock Braking System	An antilock braking system may not reduce the distance it takes to stop, but it will allow you to control your car better in an emergency that requires strong braking.
Brake Assist	This system is designed to assist the driver in emergency braking, where the driver cannot apply the high pedal force required to obtain the shortest possible braking distance. It helps the driver to apply the brakes to maximum effectiveness in an emergency braking situation.
Brake-force Distribution	This varies the amount of braking force between each wheel according to the load in the vehicle. By adjusting the brake force to each wheel there is less chance of a wheel locking up due to excessive braking on a single wheel or axle.

Features that help prevent crashes (continued)

Traction control	Traction control helps maintain grip on the road in poor conditions reducing the possibility of wheel spin when accelerating from a stand still or while in motion.
Daytime running lights	Some vehicles are now manufactured with specially fitted front lights that are automatically turned on when the car is being used. These lights increase the chance of your car being seen by others. If your car does not have this feature you should use your low-beam lights.
Vehicle colour	A highly visible car can help other drivers to judge its size, distance and relative speed. Light and bright coloured cars are easier to see than dark, dull colours.
Good driver visibility	Having good visibility of the road and other vehicles is critical. Drivers should have good visibility through the front, side and rear windows and through mirrors. Window tinting can reduce driver vision especially at dusk or at night and in poor weather conditions.

Features that reduce injury	
Vehicle safety rating	Check how well a car is likely to protect you in a crash before you buy it. You should consider an above average rating as the minimum. For new cars this is a four or five star safety rating.
Airbags – front, side and curtain	Front airbags for the driver and passenger can significantly reduce life threatening head injuries when used in conjunction with a properly worn seatbelt. Side airbags will also prevent serious injuries in a side impact crash and curtain airbags offer head protection in a crash. Both drivers and passengers need to be seated correctly and drivers must not be huddled over the steering wheel.
Side impact protection	Most new cars have side intrusion beams or other protection within the door structure and have padding on the inside door panels. Side airbags, especially those which protect the head are crucial safety features that can provide significant protection from severe injury.
Seatbelts	Seatbelts are mandatory and you are always safer with a seatbelt on. Where possible, a lap sash seatbelt is recommended in the middle of the back seat.

Features that reduce injury (continued)	
Seatbelt reminders	Seatbelt reminder systems indicate when the driver or a passenger is not wearing their seatbelt. These can be visual or audible warnings. Audible warnings are the most effective because they remain on until the seatbelt is properly fastened.
Head restraints	It is important to properly adjust head restraints to help prevent whiplash. The top of the head restraint should be adjustable at least to eye level and be as close to the back of the head as possible.
Vehicle mass 1300kg–1700kg	When involved in a crash, a vehicle that is significantly lighter than average increases the risk of injury to its occupants. A vehicle mass of between 1300kg to 1700kg is generally recommended.
Cargo barriers for station wagons	In a crash, even light objects can become deadly missiles if they are not properly restrained. Cargo barriers, which are usually constructed using an open metal grill, confine unrestrained objects to the rear compartment of the vehicle.

Features that assist driver comfort	
Easy to read displays	Instrument displays should be easy to read and the controls large enough for the driver to operate easily.

Features that assist driver comfort (continued)	
Automatic transmission	An automatic transmission can reduce fatigue and allow you to give more attention to other driving tasks including observing the traffic around you.
Air conditioning	Air conditioning can improve comfort and reduce fatigue on long trips and in hot weather.
Power steering	This makes it easier to turn sharp corners and to park.
Cruise control (set to the appropriate speed within the speed limit) and over-speed warning device	<p>Cruise control can reduce fatigue on long trips because it reduces the need to concentrate on staying within the speed limit.</p> <p>Over-speed warning devices reduce the need to concentrate on staying within the speed limit and are useful in urban and other situations where the use of cruise control is not practical. An audible beep and/or a light will warn you that you have exceeded the set speed.</p>
Seat height adjusters	Seat height adjustment can make a difference to how much a driver can see ahead and around the car, helping make driving safer and more comfortable.
Steering wheel adjustment	This complements seat height adjustment and allows you to be more comfortable, reducing fatigue and making good driving easier.
External mirrors	An external mirror on each side of the car increases the amount you can see when you are driving. For ease of use, look for mirrors that can be adjusted from inside the car using a button or switch.

Seatbelts

All drivers and passengers are required to wear seatbelts. The greater vulnerability of older people makes this even more important.

Some drivers may have trouble fastening and undoing the seatbelt clasps. Some may have trouble looking over their shoulder to check on traffic when wearing the seatbelt.

You are always safer with a seatbelt on. If you do have physical difficulties, consult an occupational therapist who can assist you with adjustments. If larger passengers have difficulty adjusting rear seatbelts, they may find the front seatbelt a better fit. No one is exempt from having to wear a seatbelt regardless of age.

Remember that seatbelts give you around a 50 per cent better chance of surviving a crash without being killed or seriously injured than not wearing one at all. Make sure all your passengers have their seatbelts fastened before you drive.

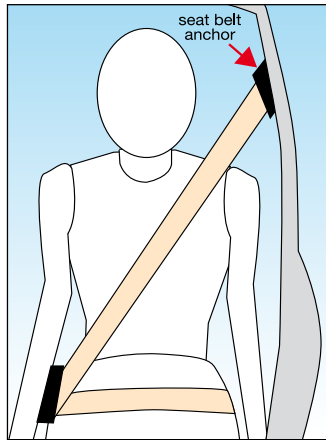
Some suggestions

- Make sure the seatbelt is secure and snugly fitted.
- Make sure the seatbelt sits flat against you. It should not be twisted.
- Wear the lap part below your stomach, sitting across your hips.
- Make sure the sash goes over your shoulder and across your chest. If it rubs your neck or your arm, you can get a sash guide to make it fit better.
- Some cars have adjustable fittings for the top part of the seatbelt.
- For very large passengers, seatbelt extenders are available that make connecting the tongue and the buckle much easier.
- If you're having difficulties using your seatbelt it may be worthwhile talking to an occupational therapist. Seatbelts can be adjusted to address most problems.

For more information refer to the brochure *Seatbelts: getting them right* available from VicRoads Bookshop.

Seatbelt anchorage adjustment

Some cars provide anchor height adjustment on the pillar. This allows you to fix the height at which the seatbelt crosses your shoulder and can help you to be more comfortable.



Where seatbelt anchorage adjustment is provided, move it up or down so that the sash part of the belt goes across your shoulder without rubbing against your neck. Wear the lap part of the seatbelt low around the hips. Remove all slack from the seatbelt so that it is firm on your body.

Transporting young children

There may be times when you are transporting young children in your car, such as your grandchildren. It is safer for children to travel in the back seat.

All children under seven years must be seated and restrained in a child restraint or booster seat when travelling in a car.

If a car has two or more rows of seats, then, by law, children under four years must not travel in the front seat. If all seats, other than the front seats, are being used by children under seven years, children aged between four and under seven years may travel in the front seat, provided they use an approved booster seat.

The following are some safety tips to help manage young children in the car:

- Always wear your own seatbelt. You are an important role model.
- Drive courteously and safely. You are setting an example.

-
- The type of restraint will depend on the age of the child:
 - Under six months – an approved, properly fastened and adjusted rear-facing child restraint.
 - Between six months and under four years – an approved, properly fastened and adjusted rear-facing child restraint OR a forward-facing child restraint with in-built harness.
 - Between four years and under seven – an approved, properly fastened and adjusted forward-facing child restraint with in-built harness OR an approved booster seat that is properly positioned and fastened.
 - Install the restraint correctly. Restraints won't work in a crash if they are not properly fitted. You can get help at a Restraint Fitting Station.
 - Adjust the harness to fit the child snugly.
 - Use a restraint for every journey, no matter how short. Most crashes occur close to home.

- Always use the kerb side for helping children in and out of the car. This keeps them out of the way of traffic.

For further information on restraints call VicRoads Road Safety Information Service – **1300 360 745**.

Adjusting the driver's seat

Check the seat height, the angle of the back of the seat and the distance of the seat from the pedals. Adjustments to the seat might help to reduce any discomfort and they can make a big difference to how much you can see ahead and around you, especially if you are short.

When buying a car, remember to check that the seat can be readily adjusted to suit all those who will drive the car. The instrument displays should be easily seen and the controls accessible to the driver.

External mirrors

An external mirror on both sides of the car will make driving safer and more comfortable. External mirrors increase the amount you are able to see when you are driving.

Occupational therapists can offer a range of suggestions for adjustments or extra equipment that will help you to see behind your car. Some cars have a switch which makes it easier to adjust external mirrors from inside the car. It saves you from the frustrating task of having to adjust, check and then adjust again.

Convex side mirrors are designed to increase your field of view. However, it can take you some time to adjust to the change in what you can see and how far away vehicles actually are.

Visibility

Light and bright coloured cars are more visible on the road than dark, dull colours. White and light yellow cars are probably the most visible. Driving during the day with your head lights on low beam will assist other drivers and pedestrians to see your vehicle.

Air conditioning

As it controls the temperature and humidity inside the car, air conditioning can contribute a great deal to your comfort. It will also help to keep you alert and to reduce fatigue in extreme weather conditions.

The air conditioner can be used to quickly demist the front and rear windscreens – using hot or cold air.

Keeping your car in good condition

It is important to keep your car in good condition, so have your car serviced regularly. If you notice anything out of the ordinary – strange noises, rattling etc – then have it checked immediately. Don't wait until it gets worse or creates a dangerous situation. An early check can often help you save on expensive repairs.

To keep your car in a safe roadworthy condition, any equipment your car had when it was first registered should still be there and operating. For example, if there was a passenger-side mirror and it has fallen off, it must be replaced.

When you have your car serviced, ask the mechanic to do a quick safety check for you.

Your car club may also be able to help with ideas for maintaining your car in a safe condition.

Here are some simple safety checks you can do yourself, as well as having regular servicing and inspections by a mechanic. However, make sure you read your car owner's manual and follow the recommended maintenance schedules.

Lights

It is important that all lights are properly aimed and maintained. Burned out light bulbs are not always easy to detect from the driver's seat but they can be a serious traffic hazard.

At least once a month check all the various lights and switches. This can be done with someone else standing in front and behind the car and checking that all the lights are working.



Alternatively drive into the garage or carport and check the lights reflecting on the wall. Regularly clean dirt and dust off all lights.

A broken indicator is sometimes identified by a marked change in the flashing speed of the turn signal indicator, but this is not always the case. No flashing at all may also indicate a defective flasher unit.

Check that your low beam head lights are not aimed too high. Your head lights should be tested by a mechanic or at your local garage and properly adjusted if required.

Tyres

In the car owner's manual you should find the recommended tyre pressure for your car's tyres. The maximum tyre pressure is also stamped on the sidewall of each tyre. A tyre should hold its pressure for about three months. If you find that your tyres are losing pressure more frequently than this take your car to a mechanic or tyre specialist and get the wheels, tyres and valves thoroughly checked.

Remember when you are checking the pressure in your tyres to also check your spare tyre. Avoid getting into trouble if you get a puncture and your spare tyre is flat.

There needs to be clear and visible tread on all parts of the tyre that meet the road.

Your tyres should be free from cuts, gouges, cracks and bulges. Visually check your tyres at least once a week to ensure treads are at a safe level, evenly worn, and have no nails embedded in them or other damage.

Promptly replace worn or damaged tyres because they are very likely to get punctures, and are particularly dangerous in wet and slippery conditions.

Tyres are manufactured with a tread wear indicator – a bump inside the tyre groove. If you are not familiar with this feature, ask your tyre specialist for assistance.

Brakes

Brakes are essential for safety. However, they are easily overlooked when checking your car.

When you use the brakes while driving:

- the car should not pull to one side or the other
- the car's motion should not feel jerky

(cont'd)

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- you should not feel any pulsations in the brake pedal except for emergency stops with an Antilock Braking System (ABS)
 - the brakes should not make grinding or squealing noises.

If you detect these warning signs a brake check should be conducted immediately by a fully trained mechanic in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. To prevent a problem with your braking system, have the brakes checked regularly by a brake specialist.

Windscreen

Clear vision is essential for safe driving.

- Keep your front and rear windscreens clean and free of cracks and chips. If chips and cracks do occur they must be repaired, or the windscreen must be replaced.
- Do not place objects like ornaments or stickers in a position where they may obstruct your view.

Wipers

- Make sure the wipers on your car remove water from your windows without leaving smudges and smears.
- Replace your wiper blades when they become noisy or fail to clear rain completely.
- Make sure the wipers operate without jerking or skipping, and check all wiper speeds.
- Remember to fill your windscreen washer when you check the oil and water.

Engine leaks

Keep the floor of your garage or carport clean. This way you can check for oil or cooling system leaks by regularly checking the ground directly under the engine for pools of liquid.

Leaks can be an indicator that a dangerous problem is developing. Some radiator fluid overflow from a warm engine may be normal, as is water from the air conditioner. However, if you discover pools of liquid under the engine it is best to consult a mechanic as soon as possible.

Steering

It is a good idea to consult a mechanic if the following things happen when steering your car:

- You can move the steering wheel more than the width of three fingers without the front wheels of the car moving.
- When driving on a smooth, flat road there is a tendency for the car to pull to either side.
- It becomes easier or harder to turn the steering wheel while driving.
- There are whining, creaking or grating noises when you turn the steering wheel.

Vehicle modifications

You need to be very careful about modifying your vehicle. Some changes may reduce your ability to control the vehicle in emergency situations. Vehicle modifications may also injure you or your passengers in the event of a crash.

Do not make modifications to your own vehicle and do not allow unqualified others to make modifications for you. If you believe that some

changes to your vehicle's controls would help you to drive more safely, seek independent, professional advice.

If you speak to an occupational therapist specialising in driving assessment you will receive good advice about what modifications you need and where to get modifications done properly. To locate an occupational therapy driving assessor contact OT Australia (Vic) on **(03) 9481 6866**.

If you belong to a Disabled Persons' Group, ask them. You can also seek advice from the Disabled Motorists Association on **(03) 9386 0413**. These people have experience in vehicle modifications and will advise you about how and where to have your vehicle modified safely and legally.

If your vehicle has been modified, other drivers should still be able to drive it. However some modifications may need to be removed and reinstalled. Modifications should also be removed before you sell the vehicle.

Loads and towing

Roof racks

Where fitted, a roof rack needs to be securely attached to the vehicle. Check each time you use it.

The load on the roof rack must be securely attached to the roof rack. There are severe fines for carrying unsecured loads.

Very heavy items should never be carried on a roof rack.

Loads in the vehicle

Heavy objects should never be carried inside the passenger compartment unless they are secured. In the event of a crash heavy items may fly around the passenger compartment and cause serious injuries. Often a seatbelt can be used to secure heavy items, however these are best carried in the boot. Fitting and using a cargo barrier in station wagons reduces the risk of injury.

Trailers and caravans

Towing a trailer or caravan puts extra demands on your driving skills and will alter the way the car performs. Acceleration will be slower, and stopping will take longer particularly when going downhill. The car may not handle as well and stability may be affected by wind – including that created by large trucks. Consequently, towing a trailer or caravan can be more stressful and tiring.

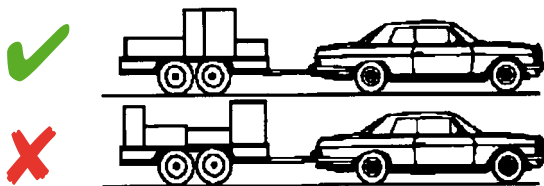
In general:

- maintain a greater distance from the vehicle in front
- allow extra distance when overtaking
- select a lower gear on long or steep downhills
- avoid sudden manoeuvres
- where possible, make provision for vehicles behind you to overtake
- take more frequent rest breaks.

The trailer or caravan needs to be securely attached to the vehicle that is towing it.

Tow bars and other parts that attach the trailer or caravan to the car need to be checked regularly. Be aware that the size and weight of what you tow must be appropriate for the vehicle as overloading could be unsafe. The load should be kept as low as possible with heavier items near the centre of the trailer. Typically, the load should be concentrated slightly forward of the trailer's axle line so that most of the weight is pushing down on the trailer's axles. Between five and 15 per cent of the total weight should be pushing down on the car's tow bar.

Loads carried in a trailer or caravan need to be carefully secured. Loose items inside a caravan are likely to cause damage if you have to swerve or stop quickly.



As many trailers and caravans are used infrequently or seasonally, make certain that the tyres, wheel bearings, brakes where fitted, lights – tail, brake and indicator – are checked and in working order.

Mirrors

A high or wide trailer or caravan will obscure your view to the rear through the normal rear vision mirrors. Retailers who sell or hire caravans can often provide temporary extension rear vision mirrors.

Further information

Your local VicRoads Customer Service Centre can provide advice and information sheets on special requirements for towing trailers and caravans, as well as information on carrying loads on or in your vehicle. Contact VicRoads on **13 11 71** for your nearest Centre.

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Good health and driving

Keeping healthy

Research suggests that good health results from a small number of common sense practices:

- Seven or eight hours quality sleep a night
- A reasonable body weight
- Healthy diet
- No smoking
- Alcohol in moderation
- Regular physical activity, like walking
- An active social life
- An independent lifestyle



Keeping healthy can help you to remain a skilled and safe driver. In turn, being a safe driver also contributes in a number of ways to the maintenance of good health. Keeping a healthy lifestyle will make sure you are as physically, emotionally, mentally and socially well as you can be — and as safe a driver as you can be. Ask your doctor how you can best achieve this.

Remember to:

- see your doctor at least once a year
- see your optometrist or ophthalmologist at least every two years.

After surgery or an illness, it's a good idea to get back into driving gradually. Ask your doctor for a referral to an occupational therapist if you experience difficulty after an illness or surgery.

Physical activity

As you get older the need to exercise and stretch becomes increasingly important. Medical evidence shows that if you keep physically fit by exercising regularly, you increase your chances of staying healthy.

People of all ages should make physical activity a part of their day. It does not need to be vigorous, but it has to be regular. Walking is very good for many older people. It can help to maintain your health and keep you driving longer. However, do not drastically change your exercise patterns until you have consulted your doctor or physiotherapist.

Remaining active and staying fit will help with day to day activities, such as doing the gardening or hanging out the clothes. Taking the time to do some exercise, such as strength training or stretching, will help reduce the risk of having a crash. It will also help you to sharpen your reflexes as a pedestrian.

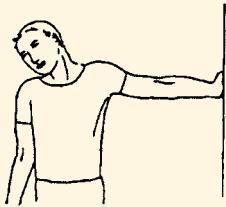
Physiotherapists and appropriately qualified fitness instructors can advise you on an exercise

program and help you monitor your progress. Some physiotherapists conduct specialised fitness classes for older people. Here are a few exercises the Australian Physiotherapy Association recommends to help keep your upper body flexible and reduce the risk of being involved in a crash.

Stretching to improve flexibility

Some important things to remember when stretching:

- Stretches should be performed under advice from a physiotherapist.
- Stretches are designed to improve both muscle and joint flexibility.
- A stretch should be taken to strain, not pain.
- A sustained stretch of 15 seconds or longer is recommended.
- Body position is of utmost importance for an effective stretch.
- Overstretching may aggravate a problem.



Arms and shoulders (neutral stretch)

Place your palm against a wall with fingers pointing backward. Keeping your shoulders down, slowly tilt your head away. You may feel a stretch through the entire length of the arm and into the shoulder.



Neck — retraction

With your face in the upright position, pull your chin toward your neck. You should feel the stretch through the back of the neck. Do not just dip your chin to chest.



Neck — side flexion

Sitting down, keep your shoulders down and back. Gently pull your head towards your shoulder as though you were pulling your ear. Do not over-stretch.



Neck — flexion and rotation

Sitting down, rotate your head to one side. Then pull your head towards your armpit and hold for around 15 seconds.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol before driving dramatically increases your risk of being involved in a crash.

Car drivers with full licences must have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of less than .05. For drivers who are ill, tired or taking some medicines, the risk will be higher at any blood alcohol concentration.

There is no set number of drinks to stay under .05 BAC. Nearly all bottles and cans will tell you on the label how many standard drinks are inside the container.

Since one person drinking a set number of drinks can reach different BAC results on different occasions, it is important to note how much you drink.

Be careful as many glasses can be deceptive, particularly wine and champagne glasses. Many glasses commonly used in restaurants and hotels contain more than one standard drink. Many hold nearer to two standard drinks. The pictures on the next page show some examples of how many standard drinks are actually in what you may be drinking.

Once consumed, only time reduces the alcohol in your blood.

How many standard drinks are you drinking?

The numbers underneath these commonly used glasses and bottle show the number of standard drinks.

					
1	1.5	1.8	0.7	1	0.9
285ml Middy/ Pot of Full Strength Beer 4.9% Alc/Vol	170ml Average Serve of Sparkling Wine/ Champagne 11.5% Alc/Vol	180ml Average Restaurant Serve of Wine 12% Alc/Vol	375ml Light Beer 2.5% Alc/ Vol	30ml Spirit Nip 40% Alc/Vol	60ml Port/ Sherry 18% Alc/Vol

Graphics courtesy of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, 2002.
Text derived from Federal Office of Road Safety brochure.

Sleep

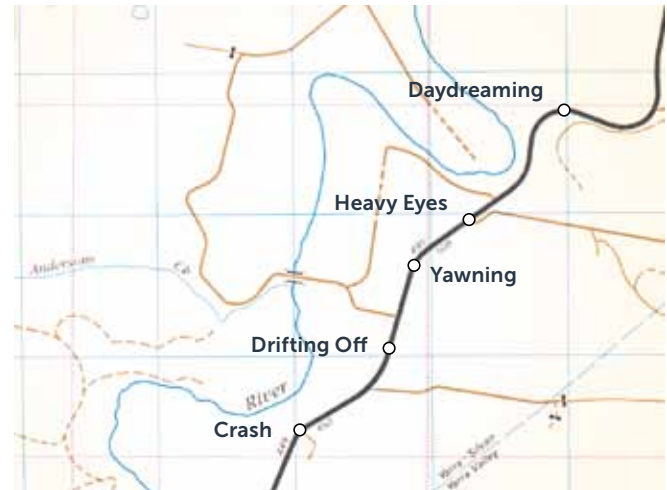
Sleep is controlled by both your circadian rhythms and your body's need for sleep. Falling asleep is something you cannot control and the longer you are awake the more difficult it is to resist sleep. A common sleep related problem is drowsiness, which affects your concentration and reaction time.

To reduce the risks associated with drowsiness, including falling asleep while driving:

- Drive at times when you would normally be awake; avoiding driving into the night and early hours of the morning.
- Get good quality sleep and be well rested for several nights prior to a long trip.
- For long trips plan to take rest breaks, at least every two hours, and if possible share the driving.
- Stop and stay somewhere if possible. If not, a power nap could be beneficial.

Typically, an adult requires seven to eight hours sleep each day. If you feel tired regularly, or if

you are not getting enough sleep, you should speak to your doctor. There are many possible causes of tiredness, including the medicines you take. If you find that you are feeling sleepy after medication, ask your doctor if there is something you can take instead, or if you can take the medicine at a different time.



A 15 minute power nap could save your life.

Emotions

Driving a car in traffic can be frustrating at times. However anger, impatience or anxiety can affect your judgement and diminish your driving effectiveness.

You can reduce the impact of driver aggression by driving in a courteous manner. Try the following tips:

- Don't drive slowly in the passing lane.
- Don't prevent other vehicles from overtaking.
- Avoid cutting in on others.
- Change lanes correctly when it's safe to do so.
- Don't block intersections.
- Give way to others when pulling out.
- Avoid following too closely to the vehicle in front.
- Use indicators to allow plenty of warning.

To avoid aggressive drivers confronting you:

- Acknowledge any mistakes you may make.
- Don't retaliate against other drivers. If the other driver is ahead, increase the gap between you and the other car. If the other

driver is tailgating you, maintain a steady speed or enable him or her to pass. If very concerned, drive to a police station.

However, if confronted directly:

- Avoid verbal or direct eye contact.
- Ensure all your windows and doors are locked.
- Make a note of the registration details and report the matter to police.

If you tend to get anxious while driving, these suggestions might help:

- Accept that anger will do nothing to get you out of irritating traffic situations.
- Recognise when you are becoming angry. Take deep breaths and try to regain calm.
- Avoid the kind of traffic you know is likely to make you angry or apprehensive.

Good drivers know that they cannot control traffic delays or aggressive drivers. What they can control is their reactions to these situations. Good drivers keep their cool.

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Planning for change and staying mobile

In the interests of your own wellbeing and for the safety of others, at some time you may need to limit your driving or stop altogether.

To maintain mobility and independence, retiring from driving requires careful planning.

When making decisions about where to live and how to get around, you need to plan carefully for the time when you can no longer drive.



Planning for change

To drive or not to drive

We all want to stay independent and mobile for as long as we can. Some of us think that this always means driving. Many people choose carefully when to drive to compensate for problems that they experience. For example, people may choose not to drive at night because it is more difficult to see and because glare is a problem.

Using both a car and public transport is a sensible way to approach these changes. If you use a car to get to public transport, you can often park for free. You also avoid parking fees, you reduce your petrol bill, and you don't have to travel on busy roads with which you are not familiar.

There is another real advantage to using a mixture of car and public transport. You become familiar with public transport so that you have an alternative to car travel if driving becomes more difficult in the future.

Everyone should plan for when they may no longer want to drive or be able to drive.

There can be substantial financial savings in not running a car as well as reduced stress from not dealing with complex traffic situations. There are also likely to be health benefits from walking or cycling more. Walking is well documented as an excellent way to keep physically fit and active. A walk to the local shops to buy the paper, bread and milk is a good idea.

Some of us may never have been a passenger, so the decision to stop driving and adapt to change is difficult. However, it can be considerably easier if the decision is yours.

It is important that you are aware of the possible consequences of driving when you are unfit to drive. Your car insurer may refuse to pay a claim for a crash in which you are involved.

Planning for transport alternatives

The decision to retire from driving can involve a change in lifestyle. More thought will need to be given to how you will carry out the tasks you have been used to carrying out as a driver. By thinking about lifestyle issues in advance, you allow yourself as much control as possible. Where you live is important and some considerations are:

Accessibility

It is important to have good access to facilities and social networks, such as shops, medical services, family and friends. Are you within walking distance? Can you easily reach these using public transport? There are clear advantages in living close to those whom you visit most frequently. Even if you continue to drive, this will allow you to cut back on your travel and to spend less on transport costs. You might not need to use public transport right now, but it could be very handy sometime in the future, even if only to reduce your driving.



Become familiar with public transport.

Public transport

Is there convenient public transport in your area?
Are you confident, knowledgeable and mobile enough to use public transport?

Familiarise yourself with public transport while you are still driving. That way you will know how to use public transport when you don't feel like driving or for trips where parking will be a problem.

Often a relative or friend, or even a grandchild, will be able to show you what you need to know to get about on public transport safely and efficiently.

Once you become familiar with the public transport options and how to use them, you might be surprised at how easily and conveniently you can get about without a car.

If you are able, you could use a four-wheeled shopping jeep to bring shopping home yourself. Folding models are easier to manage on public transport.

Perhaps get a bus to the shops and a taxi home. To feel safe and secure, you may prefer to use trains, trams and buses during the day, and taxis at night.

In metropolitan Melbourne a single ticket – Metcard – can take you anywhere you want to go on a train, tram or bus, or any combination of these. myki, the new ticketing system which is a durable, plastic smart card is also available. Many people use public transport every day instead of a car because it is quicker, easier and a lot cheaper than driving and parking a car.



If you're heading into the countryside, the V/Line network is designed to get people to and from Melbourne and regional Victoria. Larger regional centres have local bus services, which pick up passengers from the local V/Line station.

A variety of ticket options exist, including peak single, off peak single, peak day return and off-peak day return.

Help with planning your trip

For public transport information, help planning your trip or timetable and route information call **13 16 38**. For TTY facility **(03) 9619 2727**.

You can also get public transport information online at: **metlinkmelbourne.com.au**

Use Metlink's Journey Planner on the website to plan a journey on public transport using trains, trams and buses. The Journey Planner provides you with a range of travel options and related timetables.

Where to buy Metcards and myki

Metcards and myki are available at:

- retail outlets (e.g. newsagents and 7-Eleven stores)
- customer service centres at Premium Train Stations
- Metcard ticket machines at train stations, on trams and on buses (limited selection). Machines on trams only accept coins. Larger machines at stations accept notes but will only give up to \$10 in change. EFTPOS facilities are available at larger machines at train stations.
- myki machines (full fare only)
- the MetShop at Melbourne Town Hall, corner Swanston and Little Collins Streets
- selected V/Line stations and ticket agents
- the Melbourne Visitor Centre at Federation Square
- myki discovery centre at Southern Cross Station
- the Metcard Helpline **Tel: 1800 652 313** or myki **Tel: 13 69 54**
- visit the website: **metlinkmelbourne.com.au** or **myki.com.au**

Discounts on public transport

Many people are eligible for a discount (concession fare) to travel on public transport.

For more information about concession fares on public transport contact Metlink on **13 16 38** or visit the website: metlinkmelbourne.com.au

Free travel on Sundays

If you are a holder of a Victorian Seniors Card, you can register for a Seniors Sunday Pass that entitles you to free metropolitan travel on trains, trams and buses on Sundays.

You can have your application processed and your pass issued on the spot at the MetShop and at all Premium Stations between 9.30am and 3.00pm Monday to Friday.

You can also apply online at metlinkmelbourne.com.au

Victorian Seniors Card

Permanent residents who are not working full-time and are over 60 years of age are eligible for a Victorian Seniors Card. The card entitles you to travel at seniors discounted fares throughout Victoria. Cardholders are also entitled to public transport concessions in most states and territories.

Seniors Card application forms are available at any Australian Post Office.

To apply for a Seniors Card call **1300 797 210** or visit the website: seniorcard.vic.gov.au



Australian Pensioner Concession Card

If you are a pensioner you will already have this card issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The card entitles you to a concession fare on public transport services throughout Australia.



Health Care Card

This card is issued by Centrelink and entitles the holder to concession fares on public transport services within Victoria, and interstate legs of some V/Line services. For more details contact Centrelink on **13 23 00** or visit the website: centrelink.gov.au



Companion Card

The Companion Card identifies the cardholder as a person who has a significant disability and is not able to attend activities and events without attendant care type support. When the cardholder purchases a ticket to travel on public transport services within Victoria, a second ticket will be issued for their companion at no charge (subject to the Terms and Conditions of the Companion Card). For more information or an application form, call **1800 650 611** or visit the website: companioncard.org.au



Vision Impaired Travel Pass

These passes are issued to people who have severe vision impairment. The pass entitles people to free travel on public transport throughout Victoria. For more information or an application form contact the Metlink Central Pass Office on **(03) 9619 1159** or visit the website: metlinkmelbourne.com.au



Veterans

Victorian veterans and war widows who hold a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold or White card are eligible to travel on a concession fare on public transport.



Holders of the following passes are eligible for free travel on public transport in Victoria:

- War Veterans' Travel Pass (code WV)
- TPI War Veterans' Travel Pass (code TV)
- World War One Veterans' Travel Pass (code W1).

These passes are being replaced by the Victorian Public Transport Free Travel Pass. Medallion holders can exchange their current medallion for a new pass at the Metlink Central Pass Office.

For more information call **(03) 9619 1159** or **(03) 9619 1650**.

Taxi services

While taxis are usually more expensive than other forms of public transport they will deliver you directly to where you need to go. Regularly using a taxi can be cheaper than running a car.

Some taxi services have wheelchair accessible taxis available. If you use a wheelchair or motorised mobility device, ask about these facilities when you phone to book a taxi.

Taxi subsidy scheme

Victoria's Multi Purpose Taxi Program is designed to assist people who have a severe disability that prevents them travelling independently on public transport. Applicants normally must already hold an approved disability card. The taxi subsidy is 50 per cent of the metered fare with a limit of \$60 per trip and an annual limit of \$2,180.

For further information call **1800 638 802** or visit the website **transport.vic.gov.au/DOI/Internet/vehicles.nsf**

Walking and cycling as healthy ways to travel

Walking is a form of moderate physical activity that offers real health benefits as it can:

- keep you active, fit and healthy
- help you to control your weight
- reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Moderate physical activity, such as walking, reduces the likelihood of some conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

Think about how you can mix walking with other means of transport, such as walking to the bus, tram stop or railway station.

Care when walking

Pedestrians have to share the road with vehicles so it is important to take care when crossing roads. Plan where you will walk and always choose to cross roads at the safest places:

- traffic lights (watch for turning vehicles)
- pedestrian crossings
- children's crossings only when "Children Crossing" flags are displayed.

If you have to cross the road at other places:

- Walk straight across the road – don't jay-walk.
- Keep checking in both directions to make sure the way is clear.
- Do not cross the road from between parked cars as drivers may not see you.
- Try not to cross near trees or bushes because drivers may not see you.
- Avoid crossing near a bend or crest in the road. Give yourself a good chance to see vehicles coming from both directions.
- Avoid crossing roads near roundabouts, unless a pedestrian crossing is provided. If there is no pedestrian crossing, pedestrians must give way to vehicles.

If you are walking at night or on dark days it is important to be easily seen, so:

- wear light and bright coloured clothing
- wear something reflective and carry a light at night
- cross the road near street lights.

At night or especially in unfamiliar areas it is a good idea to walk with a companion.

There are several programs that can assist you to get walking more. Programs such as VICFIT's WalkSmart supports and encourages walking. Visit the website: walksmart.net

Cycling

If you have cycled before you could consider cycling as a way of getting around. If you are interested in taking up cycling you can begin by joining a local club or getting into programs offered by your local council or visit the website: cyclesmart.net

Care when cycling

Good eyesight and good reaction time and reflexes are as important when cycling as when driving a car. On bicycle paths and shared paths you may also be sharing space with senior pedestrians, children and people using motorised mobility scooters.

When you are riding on the road there are three easy steps to sharing the road with drivers:

- Be bright day and night. Wear a brightly coloured top that makes you stand out from the background. Fit lights to the front and rear of your bicycle and use them at night.
- Obey the road rules. You must stop at red lights, wear a bicycle helmet and use lights at night.
- Keep at least one metre from parked cars. This will increase your chances of avoiding an open car door or a driver who pulls out in front of you.

Travelling with friends, neighbours and family

People are often reluctant to ask for help, but this can be one of the easiest ways to get around if you do not drive. Join friends, neighbours or family on a regular trip they make, such as going to the supermarket. Your friends and family may enjoy your company!

To show your appreciation, you may consider providing something useful in exchange for a lift, for example, some vegetables or flowers from your garden, home cooking or child minding.

Community transport

Many Victorian councils and local organisations have community transport schemes using buses or cars providing low cost flexible transport.

These schemes can help you get to medical or hospital appointments or to social activities and events.

Your local council is the best starting point to find out more about community transport options available in your area. For more information contact the community transport officer at your local council.



Where you live

On average, men live about six years longer than they can drive, and women live about 10 years longer than they can drive. While we plan what we will do when we retire from work, many of us don't ask the question: how will I get around if I can't drive at some time in the future? If your doctor has told you that you have a condition that will get worse over time, you need to ask yourself that question.

When planning ahead an important consideration is to be near services such as shops, hospitals and alternative transport services.

Questions to ask yourself

Are there friends and family who live nearby who can help by driving me around?

Should I move to be closer to family and friends?
Should I move to be closer to reliable public transport, such as rail or tram?



Help and further advice on getting around

Seniors Information Victoria

Seniors Information Victoria is the key information source and a one stop hotline. Visit the office at 247 Flinders Lane or call **1300 135 090** or visit the website: cotavic.org.au/seniors

National Seniors Australia

This is a not-for-profit membership based organisation assisting the over 50s community by providing economic and social benefits; representing views to Government at all levels; and making donations to charitable institutions. For more information, call **1300 765 050** or visit the website: nationalseniors.com.au

Commonwealth CareLink

Commonwealth Carelink and Respite Centres are information services providing a link to a wide range of community, aged care and support services available locally or anywhere in Australia.

Centres provide free and confidential information for older people, people with disabilities and those who provide care and services. This information may include transport options.

To contact your nearest centre for further information, Freecall **1800 052 222**.

Travellers Aid Society

The Travellers Aid Society provides a useful service for people who find it difficult to get around Melbourne. They can provide advice about where to find services and help with meals, drinks and toilets. Their facilities include a hoist and adult change table. They also have a loan/hire scheme for wheelchairs and motorised mobility devices. You can ring ahead to book one.

Travellers Aid has facilities in the city at:

- Level 3, 225 Bourke Street, Melbourne (03) 9654 2600.
- Southern Cross Railway Station in Spencer Street, Melbourne (03) 9670 2873.
- Flinders Street Station, corner Flinders Street and Swanston Street, Melbourne VIC 3000. (03) 9610 2030.

Information about the Travellers Aid Society is available on their website at: travellersaid.org.au

Council On The Ageing Victoria (COTA Vic.)

COTA provides information, support, activities and education programs for older people. COTA can be found at:

- 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.
- 4th Floor, Block Arcade, 98 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

For more information call **(03) 9654 4443** or Freecall: **1800 136 381** or visit the website at: cotavic.org.au

Melbourne Mobility Centre

The Melbourne Mobility Centre is designed to improve access for everyone in the heart of Melbourne. It loans equipment and provides services for older people, and for persons with permanent or temporary disabilities.

The Centre is located on the first floor of the Federation Square Car Park that provides accessible car parking or a drop-off point. It is at ground level adjacent to the ArtPlay playground.

Services designed to help people get around Melbourne, include:

- equipment for hire such as motorised and manual wheelchairs, motorised mobility devices, walking frames, crutches and canes for the vision impaired
- information for people with mobility and sensory disabilities
- information about city attractions, events, facilities
- tea, coffee and refreshment facilities, and toilets
- battery re-charge facilities for motorised mobility devices.

The Centre can be contacted on **(03) 9650 6499**, Freecall: **1800 735 266** or TTY **9650 9316** or visit the website: accessmelbourne.vic.gov.au

Services you can access from home

Grocery shopping home delivery

Many supermarkets offer home delivery services at a modest cost. Some greengrocers, delicatessens and independent grocers also home deliver. A delivery service for medicines is available from some pharmacies. Ask around in your local area. You can also do your grocery shopping online with some of the larger supermarkets.

Coles: [coles.com.au](https://www.coles.com.au)

Safeway and Woolworths: [homeshop.com.au](https://www.homeshop.com.au)

Meals delivered to your home

There are many schemes operating where a volunteer or worker from your local council or other agency can deliver meals to your home. These may be ready to eat hot meals or pre-prepared meals. For further information contact your local council.

Internet and phone banking

Most banks offer both phone and internet banking. This allows you to do most of your banking from home, including moving funds between accounts, setting up transfers and making payments for bills. Contact your bank for details on how to set up these facilities.

Paying bills

There are various options for paying your bills. These options are listed on the back of most bills in the How to Pay Section. For instance:

- Paying by mail – sending a cheque or credit card payment by post.
- BPAY and Post Bill Pay – paying bills by phone or over the internet.

Learning to use the internet to save on time and travel

If you don't have access to the internet, or would like to learn more about it, contact some of the following organisations for details on how they can help.

Public Internet Access Program

If you can access the internet or have someone who can help, the Victorian Government Public Internet Access Program website provides a directory of information. Visit the website: internet-access.vic.gov.au

Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres

Contact the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (ANHLC) for information about how to find the centre closest to you that offers courses in using the internet – (03) 9654 1104 or visit the website: anhlc.asn.au

Public libraries

All libraries in Victoria provide access to the internet and most will help beginners to get started. Contact your local council for details.

University of the Third Age (U3A)

U3A provides courses run by older people for older people. For more information, call (03) 9670 3659 or visit the website: u3anetvic.org.au

WIRE Women's Information

WIRE Women's Information Centre at 210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne provides free, basic computer and internet lessons for women. For more information, call (03) 9921 0878 or visit the website: wire.org.au

Internet kiosks

These facilities enable seniors to learn for free how to use a computer, access the internet and communicate with friends and family via email. For more information call 1300 795 897 or visit the website: necseniors.net.au

Keypass and Proof of Age identification

Keypass and Proof of Age are alternative forms of identification that can be used if you don't have a current driver licence.

Keypass

The Keypass contains your photo, name, address, date of birth and signature, as well as your emergency contact details. A Keypass costs between \$50 and \$60 and application forms are available at police stations. The form contains a list of documents you will need to prove your date of birth, your identity and your address.

You can take your application form to the:

Keypass Office
Level 6, 20 Queen Street
Melbourne 3000

between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

The form may also be posted to:

PO Box 40
Collins Street West
Melbourne 8007

Proof of Age

The Victorian Proof of Age card is issued by the Department of Justice.

For full details about how to apply visit the Proof of Age page on the Department of Justice website: justice.vic.gov.au

There is a \$10 application fee.

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