To Your Health

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Is Driving Driving You Crazy?

By Marcia Feldman,
Palliative Care Coordinator

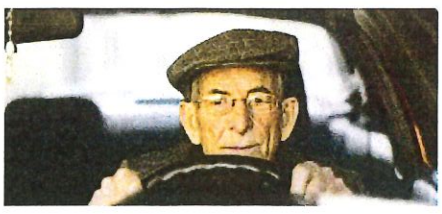
How do we know when it's time to turn over the car keys and find other modes of transportation? What are the signs to watch for when our reaction time is not as quick as it used to be? Are there other ways to get around that allow us as much freedom and independence as driving?

With the increased traffic and more instances of distracted driving as people consult their cell phones, it is more and more challenging for all of us to navigate the roads in the Boston area. As we age, there are additional factors to take into consideration when deciding whether or not it's safe to continue driving. We may have issues with memory or take medications that can slow down our reaction time or have physical limits with our mobility, sight or hearing that can greatly limit our abilities. Because the stakes are so high, it's important to be honest with ourselves about whether we continue to be able to drive safely.

Even though we may have been driving for years, it's important to assess our abilities as we age. A loved one can ride with us to experience first-hand whether or not we remain a safe driver currently. If our families live far away, the AARP has a free SafeTrip app that can be downloaded to a smartphone. The app gives feedback on braking, accelerating and cornering, scoring them against other drivers using the app. If you are not comfortable with technology, there are self-assessment questionnaires from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) has resources for older drivers about how to access one's safety to continue driving.

As the Baby Boomers age, there are more drivers age 65+ on the roads. According to the CDC, over 9,700 deaths per year from car accidents are caused by elderly drivers. Gender also plays a role in deciding whether or not to keep driving. Statistics from SeniorLiving.org report:

- 88% of men continue driving into their 70's but that drops to 55% once they pass 85.
- Only 70% of women continue driving into their early 70s, which drops to 22% by age 85.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 87% of adults aged 70 or older hold an active driver's license. And 59% of seniors aged 85+ still maintain their driver's licenses.



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Thankfully there are several ways to get around to appointments and shopping that can substitute for driving.

Big News!

The MBTA recently launched a new pilot program for those 75 and older who are no longer driving. It is called **MBTA Car-Free Seniors**. They are providing free travel across the entire MBTA system including buses, subways, ferries, commuter rail trains and they are also offering discounts on **THE RIDE**. To access the MBTA Car-Free Seniors program, apply online at the official portal –

https://www.mbta.com/CarFreeSeniors

or visit the **Charlie Service Center** in person at 296 Washington Street, Boston. In-person applicants receive a temporary credential the same day they apply and a permanent card is then mailed to you.

Our very own Green Team has put together a very useful pamphlet called, "**Transportation Resources for CWV Residents**." You can find it in the Business Center in the Orange folders mounted on the wall. Here are a few that are mentioned that include links to:

- Bedford Local Transit
- Bedford Council on Aging resources
- MBTA'S - The RIDE
- MBTA's The Ride Flex
- UBER for Seniors
- LYFT Silver
- GoGo Grandparent

When weighing the inconvenience of giving up driving against the possibility of getting into an accident and hurting someone, we need to be painfully honest with ourselves about our abilities. Think of how it would feel to cause harm to another person because of our unwillingness to acknowledge changes in our abilities. Thankfully there are many local resources making it possible to continue to be active and get around without having to drive.

Keeping our Village Healthy

As we enter the fall and winter respiratory virus season, protecting the health and well-being of our residents is extremely important. Please help us keep everyone healthy by following these precautions:

- **Stay home when you are sick** and limit close contact with others.
- **Avoid or postpone visits** with family members or other residents if you are experiencing symptoms of illness.
- **Wear a mask when leaving your home** if you are feeling unwell or experiencing any respiratory symptoms

If you need further assistance, call the clinic.

Medicare Open Enrollment

We are in the Open Enrollment period for Medicare from September 15 – December 7th. For more information about which plan is right for you, go to Medicare.gov.

Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 1st at 2:00am. Please remember to turn your clocks back and gain an extra hour of sleep as we "fall back.'