

Older drivers unaware of risks from medications and driving

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Most older drivers are unaware of the potential impact on driving performance associated with taking medications, according to new research from the Center for Injury Sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). The findings, released today by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, indicate that 95 percent of those age 55 and older have one or more medical conditions, 78 percent take one or more medications, and only 28 percent have an awareness of the risks those medications might have on driving ability.

The researchers surveyed 630 drivers ages 56 to 93. Only 18 percent reported receiving a warning from a health-care professional about potential driver-impairing (PDI) medications such as ACE inhibitors, [sedatives](#) and beta-blockers. The study found that such warnings do not increase with increasing numbers of medications used or increasing numbers of [medical](#) conditions.

"These findings indicate that health-care professionals need to take a more active role in educating their patients about the risks of PDI medications," said Paul MacLennan, Ph.D., assistant professor of surgery at UAB and the study's lead author. "Society needs to understand that PDI medications are a driving-safety issue, and there is a need for increased education geared at older drivers, their families and health professionals."

Studies have shown that certain medications are known to be associated with an increased risk for vehicle collision, according to MacLennan.

Among survey respondents age 75 and older, 77 percent said they had no awareness of the risks presented from PDI medication and had not received any information on risk from health-care providers. Yet this group was most likely to have multiple [medical conditions](#) and be taking multiple medications.

"Increased knowledge and awareness by health professionals will enable them to offer suggestion on how older drivers can modify their behavior to reduce risks, such as reducing driving or increasing self-monitoring of PDI side-effects," said MacLennan. "Increased patient education by pharmacists also is a key component to addressing PDI medications and has been shown effective in increasing patient knowledge of medications."

Source: University of Alabama at Birmingham ([news](#) : [web](#))

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