

# Senior Driving

Presented by the Winston Salem Police  
Department  
Crime Prevention Unit

# We Need To Talk

- ◆ Conversations about safe driving should occur long before driving becomes a problem
- ◆ Successful family conversations begin with good preparation and caring conversation
- ◆ Limited driving presents practical problems and strong emotions

**National statistics showed fatalities rose by 7% for drivers 75 or older from 1981 to 2000.**

# Safe Driving Habits of Senior Drivers

- Least likely to use unsafe driving practice
- Least likely to drive fast or aggressively
- High safety belt use
- Few citations for speeding, reckless driving or alcohol related offenses

## **Number of crashes for senior drivers decrease as age increases because:**

- Seniors drive fewer miles
- Seniors avoid driving at night
- Seniors avoid driving during bad weather
- Seniors avoid driving during rush hour traffic

**However, senior drivers are more likely to be injured or die when they are involved in vehicle crashes.**

# Risk Factors

- Medication use
- Reduced physical functions
- Frailty or weakness in joints or muscles
- Pre-existing medical conditions
- Dementia
- Impaired hearing

# Risk Factors cont...

- Vision:
  - Cataracts
  - Glaucoma
  - Diabetes
  - Failing peripheral vision
  - Sensitive to glare

**Drivers 65 or older who are killed in vehicle crashes were significantly more likely to die from chest injury.**

**Older drivers were more likely to die at a later date, after the vehicle crash.**

# Warning Signs of Unsafe Driving

- Feeling more nervous or fearful while driving
- Feeling exhausted after driving
- Difficulty staying in your lane of travel
- “Close calls” (near crashes)
- Trouble moving foot from gas to brake pedal or confusing the two
- Trouble paying attention to signals, road signs, and pavement markings

# Stop/Limit Driving When:

- Your getting lost frequently
- You have medical conditions or are taking medications that may be affecting your ability to handle the car safely
- Your easily distracted while driving
- You have difficulty staying in your travel lane
- Your nervous or fearful while driving
- Dents/scrapes on car, mailbox, garage doors

# Smart Driving Tips

- Before you leave plan...
  - To drive on streets you are familiar with
  - Travel to places you know and are close to home
  - Limit routes with risky spots like ramps and left turns
  - Allow extra time for travel

# Smart Driving Tips cont...

- While driving...
  - Always wear your seatbelt
  - Avoid using the cell phone (pull over)
  - Keep headlights on
  - Following distance should be at least two car lengths between you and the car in front

# Smart Driving Tips cont...

## ■ Car Safety...

- Drive a car with features that make driving easier, such as power steering and brakes, large mirrors, automatic transmission
- Check and replace windshield wiper blades often.
- Clean headlights

# What you Need is:

- Visual Acuity – Vital for driving in low visibility conditions such as dusk, rain or fog
- High Contrast Visual Acuity – Needed to identify pavement markings, as well as detect many types of hazards in or near the road
- Working Memory – Important in following directions, remembering traffic rules and regulations, and using information on highway guide signs
- Head/Neck Flexibility - Essential in checking blind spots, lane changes or merging

**Questions???**