Seniors in traffic.

Enhanced quality of life and self-esteem.

NTF
Safe traffic

www.**ntf.se**

Lifelong mobility.

Being able to get around on foot, by bike or by other vehicle is important for all age groups. This is also how our society is structured: it requires that we be able to move about in a variety of ways. Our society is designed to have us move among different locations, and we have a lifestyle that demands mobility. We are spread over ever larger geographical areas. We live in one place, use shops and services at the outskirts of the urban centres, and have family and friends living all over. That's why mobility is an important factor determining quality of life, and is needed for us to be able to function in society.

Today, about two million people in Sweden are aged 65 or over, and average life expectancy is increasing. Regardless of their individual circumstances, most people wish to continue living as before and to be able to circulate in traffic. Even when we grow old, we want to retain our independence and keep doing what we did in younger years.

But traffic conditions don't always suit everyone's needs and abilities, and may at times even become an obstacle. Older people may need more time, for example. Road conditions and dense, fast-moving traffic may create difficulties, whether you're behind the wheel, on foot, on a bike, or need to get to public transport. It can make being in traffic feel unsafe and difficult. There is a risk of diminished independence and fewer opportunities for an active life.

Ageing makes people more fragile, meaning that injuries sustained by seniors in accidents are frequently more severe. Pedestrians and cyclists are the worst affected. Seniors are also hit harder by car accidents than younger people are, and their bodies take longer to heal.

On the following pages, NTF, in collaboration with PRO, SKPF Pensionärerna and SPF Seniorerna, has compiled information and advice related to seniors in traffic – by bike, on foot and by car.

PRO SPF SENIORERNA SKPF pensionärerna

The bike as a form of exercise and transportation.

The bike is a unique means of transport. It is a form of transport with which cyclists provide their own motor power, which contributes to good health. Bicycling makes it easy to travel both short and long distances, and lets you get very close to your destination. The bike is an environmentally-friendly alternative to the car, and biking is a great way to get around while getting exercise at the same time. It strengthens your muscles and bones, while improving your physical fitness. Biking does not wear on the joints, and provides balance training to help reduce the risk of falls. There is hardly a better form of exercise.

The cyclist – a vulnerable road user

The bike is a practical means of transport in many ways, but you have to be alert while riding, as there are many different users sharing the road. According to Swedish road traffic regulations, cyclists should stick to the bicycle lane wherever possible; if there is no bicycle lane, they should ride at the edge of the road. If there is no bicycle lane while you are riding in the city or other densely populated areas, you should stay as far to the right on the road as possible. If you ride on a footpath or pavement, you may incur a fine.

A substantial proportion of severe injuries occur in single-vehicle accidents, and head injuries are among the most common. Scrapes and fractures generally heal, but a brain injury is forever. Wearing a bike helmet is one way to help control the consequences of a bicycle accident. So take care of yourself and wear a helmet when you ride.

How to find a bike helmet that fits you.

- Make sure the helmet bears the CE EN 1078 marking. That means it is approved.
- The helmet should fit snugly on your head, and it should not be possible to push it down the back of your head, leaving your forehead unprotected.
- Feel to make sure that the fit is comfortable and that the helmet provides proper ventilation.
- It should be easy to adjust the chinstrap. The adjustment position should not change when you take off your helmet.
- The helmet should cover your forehead, crown and the back of your head. The most vulnerable parts of your head in an accident are your temples and forehead.

Bikes that can help you keep on riding

Unisex bikes have a lower frame, making it easier to get on and off the bike. This also reduces the risk of an accident when starting and stopping.

Electric bikes with an electric motor. The electric motor kicks in and provides assistance when the pressure on the pedals increases, making it easier to pedal uphill or into a strong headwind.

Three-wheeled bikes are stable and are a good option for those who do not want to worry about keeping their balance. The frame is built to make it easy to climb on and off the bike, and it has a low access step to facilitate the process.

Scooters. There are also scooters with large wheels designed for senior riders who have a harder time riding a regular bike.

Walking in all weather.

Walking is good. Walking contributes to good health. Walking is also environmentally friendly, as it does not cause pollution or make noise. Exercise and the ability to participate in community life enhances quality of life, meaning that it is important to be able to walk in all seasons. This also reduces the need for assistance from the community and family members.

Accident risks
There are many factors that can affect your experience during a walk. Seniors sometimes have a harder time lifting their feet, detecting uneven ground or recovering from missteps. Your balance and vision may also deteriorate with time. Accidental falls are common, and this problem increases with age. Many more people suffer injuries on foot than, e.g. in car accidents.

Most accidental falls are caused by uneven ground, and most falls occur in slippery conditions. Seniors are more vulnerable to the impacts of an accidental fall, as our bones grow more brittle with age. Women suffer disproportionately from osteoporosis and are injured in falls twice as often as men. Accidental falls can lead to long periods of rehabilitation, lifelong convalescence or permanent disability.

Reduce the risk of falls with anti-slip cleats
Anti-slip cleats can reduce the risk of slipping, and are a good investment to help you avoid taking unnecessary tumbles.

The safest anti-slip cleats are the ones that come with studs on the entire sole, i.e. under both the heel and the forefoot. A whole-foot cleat with both heel and forefoot protection provides superior

safety on snow and ice. However, such cleats may increase the risk of slipping on hard surfaces, such as stone slabs. An anti-slip cleat with short studs often results in better balance and is easier to walk with on hard surfaces. Longer studs provide better traction in snow and soft ice. There are also dynamic anti-slip cleats whose studs retract when walking on a hard surface indoors, but which fold out when you are about to slip.

If the whole-foot cleat is not able to handle different kinds of surfaces, a partial cleat may be the better choice. In this case a heel cleat is better than a cleat for the forefoot. The risk of falling is highest at the moment you bring your heel down. Anti-slip cleats for just the heel are available both as removable cleats and as cleats fitted directly onto your shoes by the shoemaker. An anti-slip cleat fitted on the outer edge of the heel is a good idea in icy, snowy conditions, but these can lead to slips on hard surfaces. A forefoot cleat can be handier, and is definitely better than not using any anti-slip protection at all.

Checklist when buying anti-slip cleats for your shoes:

- Is the anti-slip cleat CE marked? The CE mark guarantees that the product meets certain safety requirements.
- Make sure that the anti-slip cleats fit your shoes. Buy several pairs of anti-slip cleats if you want to be able to use several different pairs of shoes.
- Is the product a dynamic anti-slip cleat that adapts to ground conditions as you walk? Is it possible to use the cleat both in snowy and slushy conditions and on bare ground with patches of ice?
- Is it easy to put on the anti-slip cleats and take them off? Some models require good grip strength in order to fit them onto your shoes. Try fitting the cleat onto your shoe before putting on your shoe.
- Does the anti-slip cleat fit in your pocket or your bag if you need to take it off temporarily?
- Can the anti-slip cleat be left on, for example when you walk into a shop?
- Can you leave the cleat in place while driving?

Shoes with studs
An alternative to wearing anti-slip cleats is to have special shoes with studs. There are shoes with permanent studs, and other models in which the studs fold out as needed. Shoes with studs are available in well-stocked shoe shops and sports shops.

Ribbed shoe soles
It can also be a good idea to take a look at the soles of your shoes. The soles of the shoes are a winter pedestrian's winter tyres, and it is important to have a good traction pattern and a good rubber formulation in the sole. It should be made of a soft material and should have a tread with plenty of grooves. The grooves should be between 5-8 millimetres deep. The heel should be low and wide. You will have better traction if the heel is grooved and if the rear edge is bevelled.

Things to keep in mind:
Anti-slip cleats can never fully compensate for poor balance or vertigo. Your muscles and balance are perishable goods that have to be kept in shape through regular practice. For the best balance, wear shoes that allow your foot to be in contact with the entire ground surface.

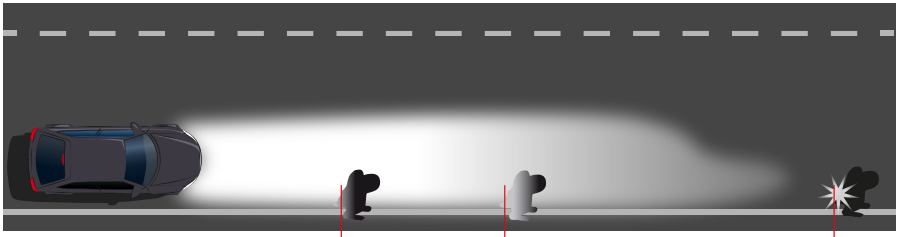
Walking aids
Walking poles can help improve your balance, and transform your walk into a combination of strength and endurance training. They train your arms, shoulders and back, while at the same time demanding more effort of your lungs and heart than ordinary walking. The poles also provide additional safety for your stride and can help you in slippery conditions. In the winter months, you can replace the pole's rubber foot with a crampon .

A *walker* assists those who have difficulty walking and who need help with their balance.

Walking canes are another aid that can help you on your walk.

Reflectors for visibility
Nearly half of all traffic accidents involving pedestrians occur after dark. For this reason, make sure to always wear reflectors and to wear them low enough that they catch the beams of oncoming vehicles. This makes it easier for people to see you and reduces the risk of accident.

Reflectors are for more than just dark country roads. It is even more important to wear reflectors in city traffic, despite the neon signs and streetlights. Most accidents involving pedestrians occur in urban areas with street lighting. If you are wearing dark clothing, a driver using his low beams will see you at a distance of 20 to 30 meters. The chances of being seen by a passing motorist increase if you wear reflectors or a reflective vest, which allow a motorist to see you at a distance of 125 meters.



Keep driving.

The car is an important part of many people's lifestyle. Cars are necessary for an active everyday life and to be able to function in society. Seniors are no exception. An advanced age is no barrier to operating a car. Seniors are often good drivers due to their sound judgement and the experience they draw on when it comes to detecting critical situations. They are also able to plan their driving so as to avoid difficult driving conditions.

Risks and impaired focus
The intensity of traffic has increased, however, and high demands are placed on today's motorists. Speed is a problem in road traffic and is a major risk factor for all road users. Speed is the cause of many accidents in traffic. It can lead to difficulties and become an obstacle. As a senior person, you are also more fragile and less able to withstand a crash, meaning that accidents have graver consequences.

Your ability to maintain your attention and switch your focus may deteriorate with time, making it more difficult to concentrate on the task at hand, driving. Age slows your ability to act in situations requiring quick decision-making and reaction times. Certain faculties like vision and hearing are also impaired with advancing age.

Seniors often have a harder time than young people making rapid and correct decisions in demanding situations. They cannot keep up, simply put. Your reaction time is slowed still further if you are simultaneously doing something else while driving, such as using a mobile phone, or if you become distracted.

Driving for as long as possible
Choose a car that is suitable for a senior driver. An automatic transmission makes a car easier to drive, as there are fewer things to keep track of. Also be sure to choose a car with good safety systems, such as the reverse parking sensor. This can be of assistance if you experience neck stiffness when turning in your seat.

You should also choose a low-entry car that rides high, so that you do not have a hard time getting into the car. Comfort and ergonomics are important, and it should be easy to operate the vehicle. There are also cars available with swivel tilt, adjustable-height chairs and intelligent cruise control that match your driving speed to traffic conditions.

Take a lesson at a driving school. It's always a good idea to refresh your driving skills and get advice on how to handle certain traffic situations.

Try driving on a skidpan and try braking on different types of surfaces. This helps enhance safety when driving on slippery roads.

When is it time to stop driving?
Nearly eight out of ten people between the ages of 65 and 75 have access to a car. Among those over 75, every second person has a car, on average.

It is always the individual driver's particular circumstances that determine when it is time to stop driving. In married couples, sometimes the more inexperienced driver – in many cases the woman – may be called on to drive more in later years, particularly if the man is no longer able to drive. This is why it is important to keep your driving skills up to date and not always leave the wheel to the person who drives most.

When you begin to feel that your limitations are getting the better of you and you feel increasing uncertainty at the prospect of driving, it may be time to park the car. Having a car that you rarely drive can be expensive in the long run. Taking a taxi once in a while instead may be a better use of that money. There is also good public transportation, meaning that it can be a good idea to start practising how to use public transport before you stop driving. Municipal mobility services and senior service buses are available for those who need to park their cars for good.

When you feel the time has come to stop driving, you can notify the Swedish Transport Agency and ask them to have your driving privileges revoked. There are also medical reasons to stop driving, in which case it is the responsibility of the doctor to notify the Swedish Transport Agency.

Refrain from driving if you:

- feel tired or dizzy
- have a slower-than-usual response time
- feel that everyday chores have become more difficult than before, such as opening packaging, preparing food or keeping track of several things at once
- have trouble with your vision and hearing
- have a hard time following conversations.

If you experience difficulties caused by the medicine you are taking, do not drive until the effects have subsided.

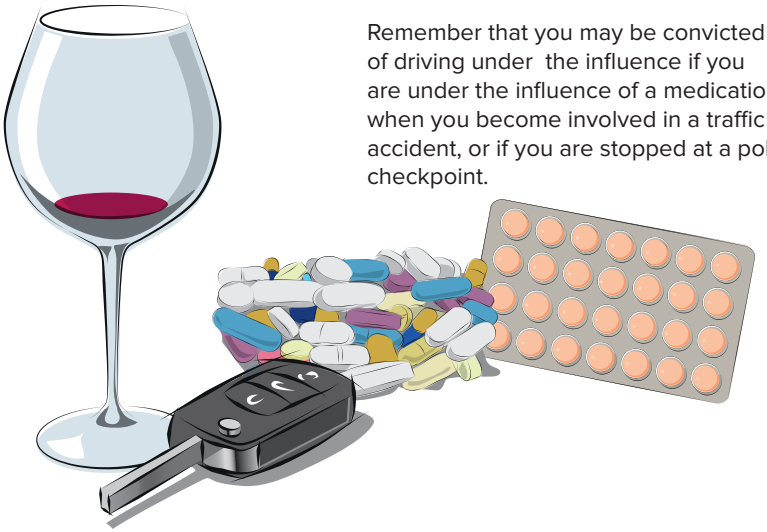
What can you do to reduce risks in traffic?

- Avoid rush-hour traffic, roads with traffic moving at high speeds and times of intense, difficult traffic.
- Impaired vision increases the need for light, meaning that you should choose to drive during the daytime wherever possible.
- Try to avoid driving in poor road conditions, such as rain or slippery roads.
- Take long and frequent breaks, and do not drive when tired.
- Adapt your driving to suit the conditions, and stick to familiar environments where you feel safe. Avoid driving on roads where you feel the driving conditions are difficult or unsafe.
- Avoid distractions, such as your mobile phone.
- If you must use your mobile phone, have a passenger dial the number, or preferably make the call for you.
- Take a break, stop the car, and then make the call.
- Use the phone's voice-activated dialling feature.
- Install assistive technology in your car allowing you to maintain your focus on the road.

Mobile phone
You should always be alert and have your eyes on traffic in order to drive safely. For this reason, you must not use devices that affect your driving in a way that is dangerous to fellow drivers. Since 2013, there has been a law about using mobile phones while driving.

Under this law, you may not use your mobile phone or any other communications equipment in a way that makes you an inattentive or dangerous driver. You are responsible for what you do with your mobile phone while driving. If you see that it is distracting you from driving, this means that your use of it is inappropriate and that you need to stop. Yet using communications technology is not prohibited per se, and there are situations while driving in which the use of modern communications technology can bring significant benefits. Keep in mind that the law is there to protect you and others around you.

Medication and alcohol
Both medication and alcohol affect your ability to drive.



Always abstain from alcohol if you are driving, or leave the car where it is if you have been drinking.

Sometimes it is necessary to take medication if you want to be able to drive, but illness and the medications used to treat it can affect you in a way that impairs attentiveness and responsiveness. This can lead to problems with your hearing, or ability to see clearly, stay awake, concentrate and react quickly. It makes you a bad driver. This is mainly the case for prescription medications taken to treat pain, sleep disorders, agitation, anxiety, depression, allergies or coughing, but other medications can also have the same effect.

The red warning triangle that appeared on packages of medication until 2005 has now been removed. Under Swedish legislation on traffic violations, drivers themselves are responsible for finding out how a medication affects their ability to drive. Doctors and pharmacists are also responsible for informing patients about risks. Always ask your doctor and carefully read the package insert included with your medication.

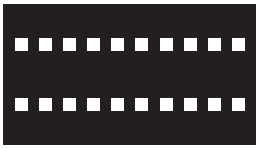
Remember that you may be convicted of driving under the influence if you are under the influence of a medication when you become involved in a traffic accident, or if you are stopped at a police checkpoint.

Some new rules and signs

Living streets

Special requirements apply to a living street. A vehicle may not be driven at speeds above walking pace (about 6-7 km/h) and may only be parked in designated parking spaces. Vehicles are always required to give way to pedestrians. You may only drive a motor vehicle on a pedestrian street in order to cross it or, for example, to transport residents or guests to a hotel on the pedestrian street. You are also allowed to drive sick or disabled persons to or from the pedestrian street, yet not at speeds above walking pace.

Living streets.



Road marking indicating bicycle passage and bicycle crossing.

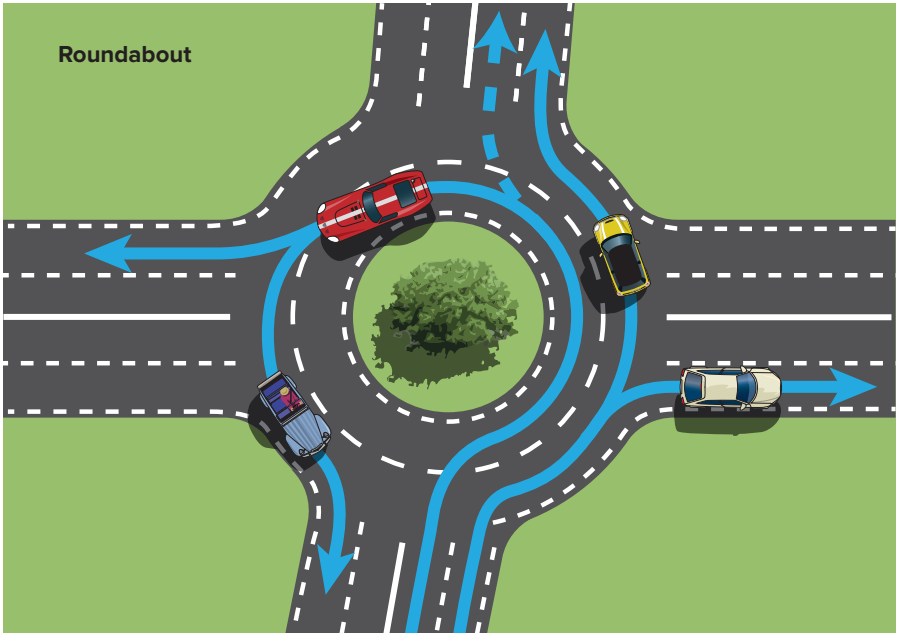
The bicycle crossing also requires a sign.

Bicycle passage and bicycle crossing

A distinction is made between bicycle passages and bicycle crossings. A bicycle passage is a part of the road used to cross the road. The cyclist must give way at an unattended bicycle passage. As a motorist, you are required to adjust your speed and to take the cyclist into consideration. When turning at a junction and passing through an unattended bicycle passage, you must give those in the passage the opportunity to cross. At an attended bicycle passage, you are required to follow the traffic signals, but are also required to give way to those who are in the bicycle passage.

Bicycle crossings must be indicated by special road signs and road markings, and vehicles must not travel at speeds greater than 30 km/h in a bicycle crossing area. Vehicles on the road are required to give way at an unattended bicycle crossing, similarly to at unattended pedestrian crossings.

Bicycle.



A roundabout, and how to drive at one.

Roundabouts are often used instead of a junction. Legally speaking, they are classified as one-way streets with one or two lanes. For this reason, special rules apply when driving at a roundabout.

You are required to give way to all vehicles located inside the roundabout. If there is a bicycle lane or a pedestrian crossing associated with the roundabout, the standard give-way rules apply.

If the roundabout has multiple lanes, choose the one that is most appropriate for continuing your journey. If there are instructions on lane selection, you are required to follow them. For right turns, get in the right lane and keep right. Use your turn signal when you approach the roundabout.

Other than that, there is no requirement regarding the use of indicators when entering a roundabout. You may use your turn signal to indicate where you are heading. Position yourself in a roundabout the same way you would at a junction. For left turns, get in the left lane. If you are driving straight ahead, stay in the right lane. Use your indicators when changing lanes inside the roundabout, and always use your right indicator when exiting the roundabout. Do not forget that you are required to give way at bicycle passages and pedestrian crossings when exiting the roundabout.

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