



Auto

NIGHT-DRIVING TIPS FOR BABY BOOMERS

When you drive at night, does it seem like you're blinded by oncoming headlights? Caught off guard by street signs that sneak up on you? No, it's not your imagination. You may be noticing natural changes in your night vision.

The American Automobile Association (AAA) reports that the amount of light drivers need to see well at night doubles roughly every 13 years. AAA estimates a 45-year-old requires four times as much light as a 19-year-old. A 60-year-old requires 10 times as much. What's more, as eyes age, pupils shrink and eye muscles lose elasticity, making older drivers much more sensitive to glare. A 55-year-old takes eight times longer than a 16-year-old to recover from glare.

The good news is, short of hanging up the keys at dusk, we can compensate for some of these changes. Consider these safety tips, courtesy of the National Institute on Aging, the U.S. National Institutes of Health, and AAA:

- **Prioritize visibility features** when choosing a car. Height-adjustable seats, a telescoping steering wheel, narrow roof pillars that don't block your view, and an easy-to-read instrument panel (simple, clear symbols and a good dashboard dimmer) boost your margin of safety. Some cars offer light-sensitive mirrors that adjust to conditions and reduce glare.
- **Stick to well-lighted, familiar routes after dark.** Allow extra time so you're not tempted to push your speed.
- **Keep at least two car lengths** between you and the car in front of you. Add more distance at higher speeds and in poor weather conditions.

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- **Clean the inside of windows** regularly to remove glare-amplifying film. Make sure headlights are free of road grime so you're getting as much light on the road as possible.
- **Consider avoiding nighttime trips in bad weather.** Overcast skies cut down on whatever natural light is available, and rain intensifies the glare from oncoming cars and increases your stopping distance.

Also, talk about your night-driving concerns with your eye-care professional. Most people need an eye exam at least every two years – and more often if you have diabetes or other health conditions. Your doctor may be able to change your prescription or add anti-reflective coating to your lenses to cut down on glare.