

Drive
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Seniors and Accident Prevention

"Accidents" don't just happen — they are predictable and preventable. Unintentional injuries are the fourth leading cause of death in Minnesota, surpassed only by cancer, heart disease and stroke. Although all ages are affected by unintentional injury, the very young and the very old are hit hardest.

About 50 percent of unintentional injury deaths in Minnesota occur among adults age 55 or older. Non-fatal injuries, in turn, severely impact the health, independence, mobility and quality of life of older adults. Many families are faced with premature institutionalization as the result of an injury to a loved one.

Falls are the most common cause of fatal injury in older adults.

- Make sure your stairways and walkways have adequate lighting (including night lights where appropriate).
- Be sure both sides of stairways have handrails.
- Remove throw rugs and repair loose, frayed carpeting.
- Equip your bathroom with grab bars on the walls and nonslip mats or strips in the bathtub.
- Consult with your physician if you are experiencing dizziness. Illness and the side effects from some medications can increase the risk of falls.

In Minnesota, motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of unintentional injury death among older adults. Many factors contribute to crashes among older adults, including visual impairments, hearing impairments and delayed reaction times.

- Always wear your seat belt when driving or riding as a passenger. Air bags are not a substitute for seat belts; they are designed to be used with safety belts.
- Driving is about ability, not about age. Keep your driving skills sharp through defensive driving courses.
- When you are a pedestrian, do not cross the street at mid-block. Obey traffic control signals at intersections.
- If possible, avoid walking at night. (More pedestrians are killed or injured at night than during daylight hours.) If you must walk at night, wear retro-reflective clothing or light colors.

Paying attention to these safety tips can prevent injury and death while protecting the independence and well-being of older adults.

Acknowledgments:

[Centers for Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov/)



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