



Eight Easy Exercises That Could Make You a Better Driver

Exercise can have many benefits for your physical and mental [well-being](#). But did you know it may also help you be a safer driver? [Driving](#) is often synonymous with independence and freedom. It enables us to come and go as we please and allows us to travel, run everyday errands, and visit friends and family. And exercising just 15 to 30 minutes a day has the potential to enhance your driving experience.

Backed By Research

Along with the MIT AgeLab, [The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence](#)[®] researched the connection between physical exercise and driving. And we found some fascinating results. We tracked experienced drivers ages 60 to 74 as they followed a physical fitness program for 15-20 minutes per day over eight to 10 weeks. Our [research](#) shows a link between daily exercise and its benefits to overall driving wellness.

The participants completed an exercise program that focused on four areas:

- Flexibility
- Range of motion
- Strength
- Coordination

Drivers in the study who exercised daily:

- Reported greater ease in turning their heads to see blind spots when changing lanes or to back up;
- Were able to rotate their bodies further to scan the driving environment while making right hand turns;
- Got into their cars more rapidly, demonstrating increased overall flexibility.

Not only does exercising daily contribute to a more positive driving experience, it may also enhance the types of driving-related movements that many people find challenging.

Before you plan your next [road trip](#), check out these eight easy exercises* to help common driving pains.

Strength Exercises

1

Bicep Curls

Recommended: 2 to 3 sets of 8 repetitions per set

For this exercise, elastic tubing with handles provides for effective strength training. Elastic tubing is color coded for resistance and can be purchased at any sporting goods store or online. If you don't have a resistance band, consider using dumbbells or [something you already have at home](#) like soup cans. Biceps curls can be performed from either a standing or a seated position. Place the elastic tubing under your feet with your toes down to prevent the tubing from rolling off your toes. Place your feet on the floor in a narrow or wide stance to adjust the tube to the length and resistance tension most comfortable for you. Begin with your elbows straight, palms facing forward and elbows tucked in at your waist. Exhale as you bend your elbows and raise your hands up close to your shoulders.

2

Squats

Recommended: 2 to 3 sets of 8 repetitions per set

Squats are an excellent exercise to increase lower body strength. They may even help you if you have to slam on the brakes. Stand tall with your feet hip distance apart and your toes pointing forward. Bend your hips and knees and push your hips back as if sitting in the air. Raise both arms forward to counter balance your hips moving back. Inhale on the downward phase of the squat, exhale as you return to the standing position. You can even hold onto a chair for balance.

Range of Motion Exercises

3

Back Stretch

Recommended: Hold for 3 to 5 seconds and repeat on the other side.

For more comfortable right hand turns, try stretching your back for 3 to 5 seconds. From a seated position, cross your right leg over your left leg either at the knee or the ankle. With your chest up and shoulders down, contract your abdominals and slowly rotate your upper body to the right. Keeping both hips in contact with the chair, hold at the point of tension for up to five seconds.

4

Heel Drops

Recommended: 8 to 12 repetitions

To keep the pedal to the metal (safely!), try heel drops to maximize ankle strength and flexibility. From a seated position, slowly alternate pointing and flexing your toes and ankles. Hold each point and flexed position for 3 to 5

seconds. Think of the driving action required for your feet to point and flex at the ankle as they press on the brake and accelerator pedals.

Flexibility Exercises

5

Chest & Shoulder Expansion

Recommended: 4 repetitions

Chest and shoulder expansions are beneficial for greater mobility and flexibility for turning your head when backing out. From a seated position, sit forward in your chair and place your hands low on the back frame of the chair. Lean forward at your hips until your elbows are straight. Inhale while lifting your chest, exhale as you lean forward at your hips and stretch your shoulders.

6

Shoulder Stretch

Recommended: Hold for 5 to 10 seconds and repeat on the other side. Repeat 1 to 2 times.

Try stretching your arm across your body by holding your opposite arm on your tricep and pulling gently, this will help with your range of motion. From a seated or standing position, maintain good posture with your chest lifted, shoulders down and abdominals tight. Cross your right arm over your chest (below shoulder height) and hold in place with your left hand above the elbow for a shoulder and back stretch.

Flexibility Exercises:

7

Soccer Kicks

Recommended: 4 sets of 8 repetitions per set

Soccer kicks are great for improving reaction time, agility, balance and coordination. On a flat surface area, warm up with low kicks, alternating right and left kicks. Stand tall with good posture – chest up and shoulders down. Kick across your body with a slight bend in your knees. Let both arms move in the opposite direction your leg is kicking.

8

Lateral Steps

Recommended: 4 sets of 8 repetitions per set

Follow up with a few lateral steps to improve integration of movement in your upper and lower body in addition to agility, balance and coordination. On a flat surface area, start with your feet together and step sideways right and left – with your feet moving as wide as you are comfortable. Keep a slight bend in your knees as you step to the right and left. Place your hands on your hips or move your arms up and down at the shoulder. Breathe evenly and continuously.

How to Get Started

Exercises like these are easy to learn, can be done anywhere and can be done in combination with your current exercise program. To add or begin an exercise program* to boost your driving wellness:

- Check with your health provider on the best exercise plan for you. Review and print our [exercise guide](#) and come up with your own plan.

- Follow a regular exercise program. To set yourself up for success, connect with friends and build it into your calendar. Try to spend at least 15 to 30 minutes a day being active.