

ROAD SAFETY IS FOR ALL AGES



Québec 



Direction des communications

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Introduction.....	2
Signs and signals: the key to road safety	3
Pedestrians: habits to improve	8
Riding your bike safely	10
Driver's licence: a privilege?.....	14
Starting to drive at age 65 or over? Yes, it's possible!	15
Keeping your licence after age 74	17
Grandchildren buckled up so they stay safe	18
Medication and driving.....	20
Driving: stress and annoyance.....	21
Protect your life – use some restraint.....	22
The insurance plan for all road users.....	24
Feel safe on the road – maintain your vehicle in good condition.....	26
Planning ahead reduces the risk of accidents.....	28
Getting around without a car	29
Food for thought	30
To find out more.....	32

Introduction

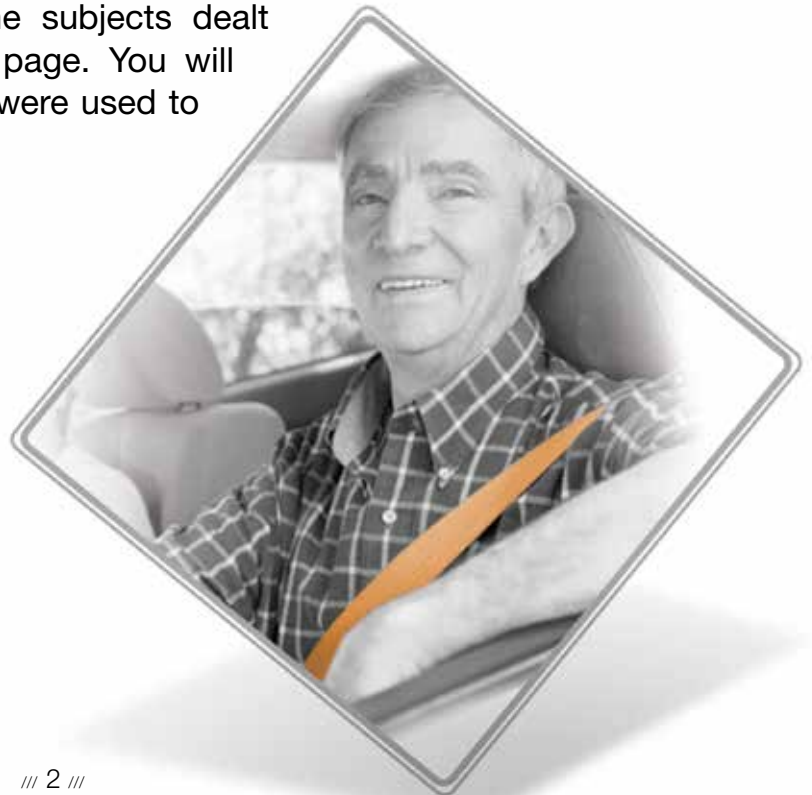
Because of changing demographics in Québec, seniors make up an increasingly greater proportion of our population.

The main purpose of this brochure is to raise your awareness regarding certain situations that you may face as a pedestrian, cyclist or motorist.

The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) also hopes that this document will help you assess your own habits and behaviour, and thereby help you find solutions to the difficulties you experience as a road user.

For more information on some of the subjects dealt with in this brochure, go to the last page. You will find references to the documents that were used to compile this guide.

Enjoy your reading!



Signs and signals: the key to road safety

Whether you are a pedestrian, cyclist or motorist, road signs and traffic signals are essential to ensure your safety. Road signs, traffic lights and pavement markings provide information so that you can take the proper precautions.

Road signs

The shape and colour of road signs indicate the type of information that they convey.

SHAPE



OCTAGON
Stop



DIAMOND
Danger



TRIANGLE
Yield right of
way



PENTAGON
School zone

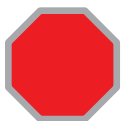


**HORIZONTAL
RECTANGLE**
Instruction



**VERTICAL
RECTANGLE**
Obligation or
prohibition

COLOUR



RED
stop



YELLOW
danger



YELLOW-GREEN
school zone



BLUE
private tourist
attractions



GREEN
information



WHITE
AND BLACK
obligations



BROWN
public tourist
attractions
and geographic
references



ORANGE
road work

If you don't understand certain signs, you could put yourself in a situation that could lead to an accident. There are a lot of signs in our road environment, so it might be a good idea to refresh your memory as to their meaning and use. To do so, go to the Ministère des Transports Web site at www.mtqsignalisation.mtq.gouv.qc.ca or consult the *Driver's Handbook*.

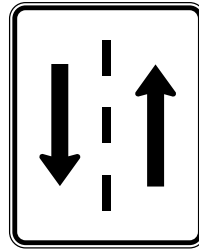
PAY EXTRA ATTENTION
WHEN YOU SEE THESE SIGNS



Yield



No entry



Two-way traffic



No U-turns



Start of a
school zone



No passing



Advance
warning of a
school bus stop



People working



Flagperson
ahead



Prepare to stop

Traffic lights

AT AN INTERSECTION WITHOUT A PEDESTRIAN LIGHT

- >>> The green light authorizes pedestrians to cross;
- >>> The green light authorizes motorists to go straight or turn.

AT AN INTERSECTION WITH A PEDESTRIAN LIGHT

- >>> An orange hand that is not flashing indicates that pedestrians should not cross;
- >>> A pedestrian silhouette indicates that it is time to cross;
- >>> A flashing orange hand with a numerical countdown indicates that pedestrians should cross only if they can reach the other sidewalk or safety zone before the hand stops flashing. A pedestrian who is already in the intersection when the hand starts flashing should pick up the pace.



Pavement markings

Pavement markings are very important, because they supplement indications on road signs and from traffic lights.

STOP LINE

This mark shows where motorists must stop at an intersection.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

When there are traffic lights or stop signs at an intersection, white stripes or two parallel white lines indicate a pedestrian crossing. If there are no lights or stop signs, or between intersections, these crossings are marked by yellow stripes.

When pedestrians cross at these places, motorists are required to yield the right of way to pedestrians and allow them to cross.

LANE LINES

Arrows on the pavement indicate where motorists should be in order to do one of the following: turn left, turn right or go straight.

Pedestrians: habits to improve

Accident reports tend to show that pedestrians who were injured or killed on the road network did not comply with road signs and traffic signals, crossed the street from between two parked cars or were walking with the flow of traffic on the side of the road. It has also been shown that the consequences of accidents for senior pedestrians are often serious or fatal because of their greater physiological vulnerability to impact and injury.



Here are some reminders about the main road safety rules that pedestrians should obey:

- >>> Always cross at intersections or other authorized areas (where there are appropriate signs, signals and pavement markings);
- >>> Obey traffic lights or any pedestrian lights at intersections;
- >>> Look to the left and to the right, then again to the left before crossing a street;
- >>> Use the sidewalk; if there is no sidewalk, walk on the side of the road facing oncoming traffic;
- >>> To be clearly visible at night or on a day when there is little sunlight, wear light-coloured clothing or clothing with reflective strips. Darkness is a pedestrian's enemy. In fact, fall is the time when the highest number of pedestrian deaths occurs.

Remember that motorists may have trouble seeing pedestrians because they are blinded by sunlight or the headlights of an oncoming vehicle.

Increase your chances of being seen clearly by motorists by adopting predictable behaviour, complying with the *Highway Safety Code* and avoiding unnecessary risks (e.g. dodging between vehicles).

Riding your bike safely

Riding a bike is an excellent way to keep in shape. Seniors appear to have gotten the message; there has been a sharp increase in the number of cycling enthusiasts among seniors. Bicycle safety starts with obeying the *Highway Safety Code* and adopting defensive cycling behaviour. Paying attention to the road environment, ensuring that you can see and be seen by others, anticipating potential danger – all of these elements are very important!

In particular, the *Highway Safety Code* requires cyclists to:

- >>> comply with road signs and traffic signals;
- >>> travel in the same direction as traffic and stay on the far right side of the road;
- >>> signal their intentions using appropriate hand signals;
- >>> ride in a single file when in a group;
- >>> equip their bicycles with the mandatory lights and reflectors.

The Code prohibits cyclists from:

- >>> riding on the sidewalk
- >>> wearing headphones.

HAND SIGNALS



TURNING
LEFT



STOPPING
OR SLOWING DOWN



TURNING
RIGHT

Wearing a helmet

Cyclists often sustain head injuries when they fall, which is why wearing a helmet is so important.

It's not enough just to have a helmet; it must be properly adjusted as well.

- >>> It should fit properly on the top of the head: not too far forward or too far back.
- >>> It should not shift or move around, or be too tight to be comfortable.
- >>> The straps should be snug, without being too tight under the chin.

In the event of a fall, the helmet should be replaced because the inner liner may be damaged and no longer provide optimum protection.

Note that a helmet is mandatory when riding an electric bicycle.



For both comfort and safety, bicycles should be adjusted for their riders

- »» To check the height of the frame, you should stand astride the bicycle above the crossbar with both feet flat on the ground. There should be a clearance of at least 2 cm (0.5 in) between the crotch and crossbar.
- »» The seat should be parallel to the ground. To adjust it correctly, your leg should be completely extended with the heel on the pedal at its lowest point.



BE EXTRA CAREFUL

Watch out for:

- >>> vehicles turning right at a red light;
- >>> car doors that may open suddenly;
- >>> vehicles coming out of driveways;
- >>> spaces between parked vehicles;
- >>> city and school buses (frequent stops and starts).

In addition, before you perform a manoeuvre, establish eye contact with motorists to make sure they have seen you.



Driver's licence: a privilege?

A driver's licence should not be considered a right, but rather a privilege whose use requires respecting oneself and other road users.

To keep the privilege as long as possible, you need to monitor your health. If you have the slightest doubt about your physical or mental abilities, you should visit your doctor.



Starting to drive at age 65 or over? Yes, it's possible!

Driving a passenger vehicle is not a question of age, but rather a question of having good sensory (e.g. vision, hearing), cognitive (e.g. memory, judgment, attention) and motor (e.g. flexibility, muscular strength) functions.

Registering for a course to learn to drive a passenger vehicle (Class 5 driver's licence) is now mandatory. To obtain your driver's licence, you must pass the theoretical and practical classes given by a driving school accredited by the Association québécoise des transports (AQTr) and also pass the SAAQ knowledge and road tests.

Like all new drivers, you must also meet the medical requirements and pass the SAAQ vision test.

More detailed information is available at SAAQ service centres and on our Web site: www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca

Two educational guides are recommended to learn the theory required to drive a passenger vehicle:

- >>> *Driver's Handbook*;
- >>> *Driving a Passenger Vehicle*.

These documents are sold by
Les Publications du Québec
and at most bookstores.



Keeping your licence after age 74

As previously indicated, driving a vehicle is a privilege that is not necessarily related to a person's age. That being the case, the best way to keep your licence for as long as possible is to regularly monitor the state of your faculties.

In addition, don't forget that, as of age 75, the law requires driver's licence holders to undergo medical and optometry examinations.

The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec sends all drivers over 74 a letter accompanied by medical forms to be completed by a health professional at least six months before:

**age 75, 80 and every
two years thereafter.**

Under section 95 of the *Highway Safety Code*, driver's licence holders are required to inform the SAAQ of any change to their health within 30 days of that change

Grandchildren

buckled up so they stay safe

Grandparents often drive with their grandchildren. It is important to know that, under the *Highway Safety Code*, children whose sitting height is less than 63 cm (measured from the seat to the top of the head) must be secured in an appropriate car seat adapted to their weight and height.

Children who have outgrown their infant and child seats but who are not yet able to use a seat belt safely on their own should be seated in a booster seat.

Child safety seats are available in three types, and are designed for different child weights.

Infant seats

These seats are designed for children who weigh under 10 kg (22 lbs) and should always be installed on the back seat facing the rear. As long as children meet the height and weight limits for the seat, they should travel in this position.

Child seats

These seats are designed for children who weigh from 10 to 30 kg (22 to 65 lbs). Note that your vehicle must be equipped for such a seat. A child seat should be placed on the back seat, facing the rear. As long as children meet the height and weight limits for the seat, they should travel in this position. The manufacturer's instruction manual specifies when the seat should be installed facing the front.

Booster seats

These seats are for children who weigh 18 kg (40 lbs) or more. There is no age limit for using a booster seat, only a weight limit. A booster seat raises the child off the seat so the seat belt can be properly adjusted across the middle of the shoulder (over the collarbone) and on the hips.

Warning!

The back seat is the safest place for children 12 years and under. In the back, they are the furthest away from impact zones in the event of a head-on collision, as well from the front air bags, which can cause serious or even fatal injuries.

There's help!

To watch video clips about car seats, or about how to properly install a car seat, visit www.childcarseat.qc.ca.



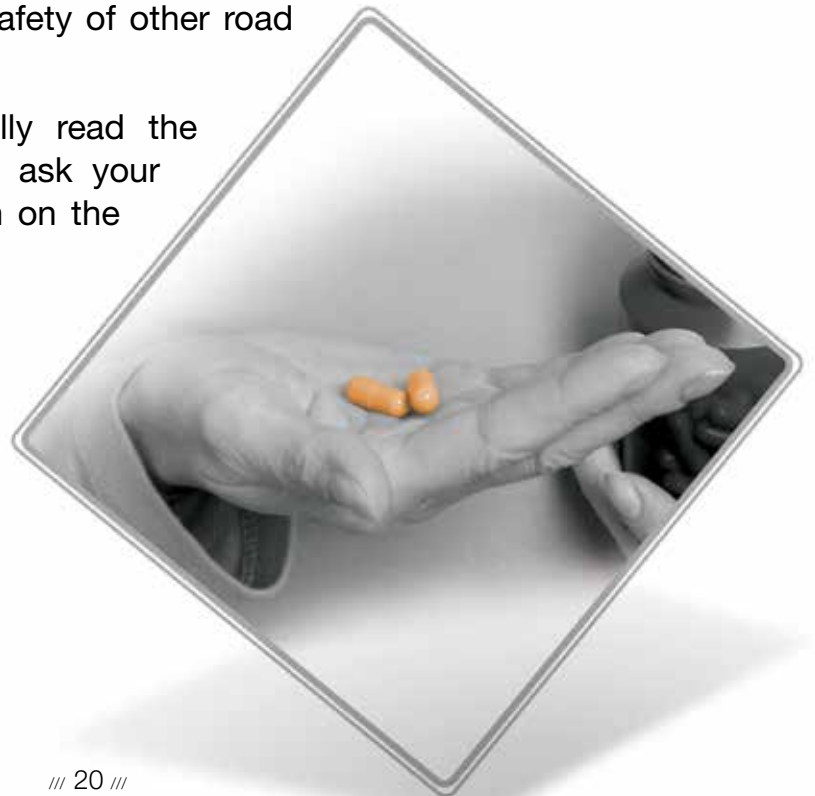
Medication and driving

Taking certain kinds of medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, may be incompatible with safe driving. Some medication can affect concentration, vision, physical coordination and behaviour.

Furthermore, ceasing to take prescribed medication without your physician's authorization may also be incompatible with safe driving. For example, driving without taking your diabetes or epilepsy medication could be dangerous for your safety and the safety of other road users.

It is therefore important to carefully read the warnings on the packaging and to ask your doctor or pharmacist for information on the effects of medication on driving.

If you are taking new medication or if your dosage has changed, take the time to observe its effects before taking the wheel. Note that alcohol, even in small quantities, can increase the harmful effects of medication on driving.



Driving: stress and annoyance

Driving a vehicle can sometimes have its share of aggravations. We can experience stress on certain busy thoroughfares and also in response to the irritating behaviour of some drivers.

Is someone tailgating you?

A FEW TIPS TO HANDLE THE SITUATION

- >>> Stay calm and use safe driving behaviour.
- >>> If necessary, increase the distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you.
- >>> Observe the vehicle following you in your rear-view mirror.
- >>> Be ready to react if the car behind you passes you in an inappropriate place.
- >>> As soon as circumstances permit, let the car pass you and yield the right of way.

Protect your life

– use restraint

Some drivers underestimate the value of the various safety mechanisms that are standard equipment on cars. Used properly, seat belts, headrests and air bags can save your life.

Wearing a seat belt is now the norm for Quebecers. Indeed, buckling up has become a reflex for most people. Using a seat belt in combination with air bags decreases the chances of serious head injuries by 75% in the event of a collision.

In addition, properly adjusted headrests can reduce the risk of whiplash by more than 25%.

It is also important to properly secure all objects in the car, since anything in the passenger compartment that is not secured can become a projectile that may strike passengers in the event of a collision.

If there is an animal in the car, be sure that it doesn't obstruct the driver's vision or interfere with driving. An unsecured animal can also become a projectile.

Lastly, a tip: to reduce the risk of injuries due to air bags, keep a distance of at least 25 cm (10 inches) between the air bag cover and yourself.

Do you want to change your driving position?

TRY THE FOLLOWING:

- >>> move your seat back, making sure that you still have easy access to the pedals;
- >>> slightly incline the back of your seat towards the rear;
- >>> raise your seat if possible, or use a cushion so that your field of vision is not reduced.

The insurance plan for all road users

Quebecers are covered by the public automobile insurance plan if they sustain an injury in a road accident, regardless of where the accident occurred or who is at fault.

Property damage must be covered by liability insurance with a private insurance company.

If you plan to drive abroad, it is a good idea to increase your liability insurance coverage in the event of a lawsuit against you for bodily injury and third-party property damage.



The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec can pay the following compensation to victims of an automobile accident:

- >>> income replacement indemnities;
- >>> reimbursement of certain expenses in connection with the accident (e.g. medication, replacement or repair of damaged clothing, home assistance);
- >>> lump-sum compensation for consequences such as a loss of enjoyment of life, mental suffering or pain;
- >>> rehabilitation indemnities;
- >>> death benefit (paid to the victim's spouse and any dependants);
- >>> lump-sum compensation to cover funeral expenses (paid to the victim's estate).

To make a claim for compensation, you must order the necessary forms and documents by phone at **1 888 810-2525**.

feel safe on the road

– maintain your vehicle in good condition

A vehicle that is in good mechanical condition helps make drivers feel like they are in complete control on the road. You don't need to be a licensed mechanic to detect signs that could indicate major or minor problems. The best times to inspect your vehicle are when you are washing it, just before winter or spring, or before leaving on vacation or on a long trip. Here are a few tips:

Brakes

- >>> Are they noisy?
- >>> Is there the sound of metal on metal?
- >>> Does your vehicle pull to the right or left when you brake

Parking brake

(pedal, hand or handle)

- >>> Does it keep your vehicle completely immobile when you start it or when you are on a slope?

Rear-view and side mirrors

- >>> Are they securely attached?
- >>> Are they cracked, chipped or tarnished?

Steering

- >>> Does the steering wheel turn easily?
- >>> Is the steering properly adjusted?

Windshield

- >>> Does it have any cracks?
- >>> Do the wipers and windshield-washing systems provide optimum visibility?

Tires

- >>> Are they properly inflated?
- >>> Are they unevenly or unusually worn?

Exhaust system

- >>> Is it noisy?
- >>> Are there any detectable leaks?

Lights

- >>> Are they in good condition and unobstructed?

Seat belts

- >>> Are the buckles and anchor points in good condition?



If you have even the smallest doubt about whether any of these elements are in good condition, take your vehicle to a mechanic.

Planning ahead reduces the risk of accidents

As we get older, our visual, cognitive and motor abilities tend to decrease, thus increasing the risk of being involved in an accident; however, there are practical steps that can be taken to greatly reduce that risk.

Here are a few tips:

- >>> Don't travel during rush hour;
- >>> Avoid busy streets;
- >>> Avoid driving at night and in bad weather;
- >>> Plan long trips and make sure there are rest periods;
- >>> Regularly check your vehicle's mechanical condition.

These precautions are easy to take, and they can help you keep your driver's licence for as long as possible.

Lastly, two additional measures are very important:

- >>> Do all you can to maintain good mental and physical health;
- >>> Have regular medical check-ups.

Getting around without a car

The thought of no longer being able to drive can make you uncomfortable and anxious, especially when you are used to travelling on your own. Planning how you will get around can make the transition easier. It is never too early to explore the various options open to you.

Here are some examples:

- >>> Buses and other forms of public transit;
- >>> Car-pooling with friends and family;
- >>> Taxis;
- >>> Ride services offered by various community organizations;
- >>> Paratransit services.

You can contact your local health and social services centre (CSSS) to find out what resources are available in your area.



Food for thought

Your actual age does not really reflect your ability to drive. Some people can drive until an advanced age, while others have serious problems when they are still young.

In general, the effects of aging appear slowly, the changes are barely perceptible and we get used to them without really noticing.

Therefore, as we get older, it is important to regularly take stock of our health, since it greatly influences our ability to drive. Below is some food for thought:

Identify your health problems

- >>> Eye disease
- >>> High or low blood pressure
- >>> Dizziness or vertigo
- >>> Diabetes

Identify driving techniques that can cause you problems

- >>> Changing lanes
- >>> Passing another car
- >>> Making a complete stop
- >>> Turning left at an intersection

Identify problems related to the road environment

- >>> Understanding road signs and traffic signals
- >>> Driving in heavy traffic
- >>> Driving in rain or snow
- >>> Driving at night

Analyze any accidents you may have had

- >>> Accidents involving injuries
- >>> Accidents involving property damage

Estimate the number of kilometres you

- >>> From 1 to 50 km
- >>> More than 50 km

It is your responsibility to ensure that your health, skills and knowledge are adequate when you drive. If you have any doubts about your ability to drive safely, talk about it with a member of your family, a friend or your doctor.

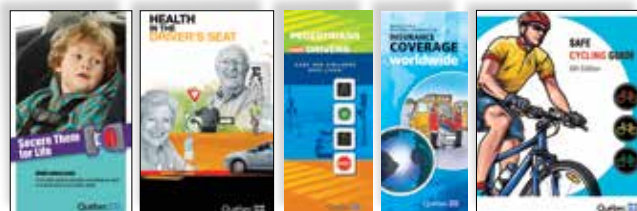
To find out more...

Folders and brochures by the SAAQ on the subjects dealt with in this brochure

- >>> *Secure Them for Life!*
- >>> *Health in the Driver's Seat*
- >>> *Pedestrians and Drivers –
Care and Vigilance Save Lives*
- >>> *Insurance Coverage Worldwide*
- >>> *Safe Cycling Guide*

Other information brochures

- >>> *Driver's Handbook*
Les Publications du Québec
- >>> *Driving a Passenger Vehicle*
Les Publications du Québec



TO ORDER FOLDERS AND BROCHURES FROM THE SOCIÉTÉ DE L'ASSURANCE AUTOMOBILE DU QUÉBEC

By mail

Direction des communications
Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec
Case postale 19600, succursale Terminus
Québec (Québec) G1K 8J6

On our Web site

www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca

By telephone

Québec: 418 643-7620
Montréal: 514 873-7620
Elsewhere (Québec, Canada, U.S.A.): 1 800 361-7620 (toll-free)

TDD/TTY

For the hearing impaired
Montréal: 514 954-7763
Elsewhere in Québec: 1 800 565-7763 (toll-free)



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