

8 TIPS TO HELP AN OLDER PERSON GET IN AND OUT OF A CAR SAFELY

Read on for simple ways to make car journeys safer, easier and more comfortable.

Changes in strength, balance, flexibility or mobility can make it harder to get in and out of a car. A few simple adjustments can reduce the risk of a fall and help an older person feel more confident when they travel.

Top Tips

1 **Choose a safe place to stop.**

Park on firm, level ground where possible. Leave enough room to open the car door fully and avoid uneven surfaces, steep slopes or tight spaces.

2 **Make some extra room.** Move the passenger seat back before the person gets in. This gives them more room to sit, turn and bring their legs into the car.

3 **Sit down first.** Ask the person to stand with their back towards the seat. Once they can feel the seat behind their legs, they can lower themselves into a seated position.

4 **Bring the legs into the car.** Once seated, the person can turn their body and bring both legs into the car at a comfortable pace. They should avoid twisting suddenly or rushing the movement.

5 **Use a stable handhold.** A secure part of the vehicle, such as the dashboard or door frame, may provide extra support. Avoid objects that could move or shift.

6 **Take your time.** Slow, controlled movements can help reduce strain and loss of balance. Give the person enough time and avoid rushing them.

7 **Legs out before standing.** To get out of the car, turn towards the open door and bring both legs outside first. Pause before standing.

8 **Stay close if support is needed.** Stay nearby if the person feels unsteady. Do not pull them up by their arms. If they regularly need physical help with transfers, ask a physiotherapist or occupational therapist for advice.

✦ Make the journey easier

A few small changes can make car travel more comfortable:

- Choose well fitting, non slip footwear
- Keep a walking stick, frame or other mobility aid within easy reach
- Make sure the person has enough space to move
- Allow plenty of time before appointments or outings
- Encourage the person to tell you if they feel dizzy, sore or unsteady
- Take extra care after a long journey, as stiffness can make the first few steps harder

✦ When extra equipment may help

If turning on the car seat becomes difficult, a physiotherapist or occupational therapist may recommend equipment such as a swivel cushion or transfer handle.

Some occupational therapy guidance suggests using a plastic bag temporarily on the seat to reduce friction while the person turns. Always remove the bag before the car moves. A slippery surface under the passenger during travel can create a safety risk.

If pain, weakness or reduced mobility regularly makes car transfers difficult, ask a health professional for individual advice.

✦ If the person feels dizzy or unsteady

Do not rush them to stand.

Ask them to stay seated with both feet supported and give them time to recover. If the dizziness does not settle, or happens often, encourage them to talk to their doctor or health professional.

If the person suddenly becomes very unwell, loses consciousness or shows signs of a medical emergency, call 111.

KEEP GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

A difficult car transfer can make someone reluctant to go out, but the right support can help them stay connected with the people and places that matter to them.

Small changes to the way someone gets in and out of a car can improve comfort, confidence and safety. Where possible, encourage the person to do as much as they can for themselves and provide support only where they need it.

If car transfers become difficult or unsafe, a physiotherapist or occupational therapist can recommend techniques or equipment that suit the individual.

As a charitable organisation, we aim to create opportunities for all older people to age well and live fully, through homes, care, community and advocacy.



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