

Study: Should Newer Cars Be Modified to Protect Older Drivers?

Boom in older drivers has experts rethinking one-size-fits-all seat belts, airbags

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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NEWS PACKAGE



SUGGESTED TEASE	STILL TO COME, NEW CRASH TESTS DESIGNED FOR OLDER DRIVERS. WHY EXPERTS ARE RETHINKING SAFETY STANDARDS AND HOW THAT MIGHT AFFECT CARS OF THE FUTURE.
ANCHOR LEAD	WHEN SEAT BELTS WERE FIRST REQUIRED BY LAW NEARLY 40 YEARS AGO, THEY WERE DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE "AVERAGE" DRIVER - WHO, AT THE TIME, WAS A 40-YEAR-OLD MAN. THAT'S CERTAINLY NOT THE CASE TODAY. IN FACT, RIGHT NOW THERE ARE MORE THAN 36 MILLION DRIVERS OVER THE AGE OF 65, ¹ AND BECAUSE OF OUTDATED DESIGNS, MANY ARE AT A HIGHER RISK OF BEING INJURED BY SEAT BELTS. ² BUT THAT MAY SOON BE CHANGING. CLARK POWELL HAS DETAILS.
(PACKAGE START) -----	
CG: Courtesy: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center :00 - :03	(Nats - Car Starting) :02
Shot of Helen getting in car	EVEN WELL INTO HER 70s HELEN KESSLER SAYS SHE STILL FEELS CONFIDENT ON THE ROAD - BUT BECAUSE OF HER HEIGHT AND THE WAY HER SEAT BELT IS POSITIONED, SHE'S NOT ALWAYS COMFORTABLE BEHIND THE WHEEL. :10
Shot of Helen buckling up	<i>"I just put it across me and it usually goes across here, but by the time I get done driving, it's up closer here and I just pull it down each time." :08</i>
CG: Helen Kessler Older Driver :09 - :18	THAT'S NOT UNCOMMON. SEAT BELT DESIGNS WERE BASED ON DUMMIES RESEMBLING AVERAGED SIZED, 40-YEAR-OLD MEN DECADES AGO. NOW, DRIVERS ARE MORE DIVERSE AND SEAT BELTS CAN BE LESS EFFECTIVE. :10
Shots of old crash test video	<i>"It's not enough to keep someone my size, maybe, back</i>
Shots of Helen driving	

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<p>CG: John Bolte, PhD Ohio State College of Medicine :29 - :38</p>	<p><i>in my seat and it's probably too much force to keep an elderly occupant in their seat, which could cause thoracic injuries."</i> :09 (NATS - crash test) :01</p>
<p>Shots of crash tests</p>	<p>SO, TO BETTER PROTECT A WIDER RANGE OF DRIVERS, RESEARCHERS AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER ARE WORKING WITH AUTOMAKERS TO RETHINK SAFETY SYSTEMS.</p>
<p>Wide shot of new dummy</p>	<p>STARTING WITH SMALLER MODELS THAT MORE CLOSELY REPRESENT MORE FRAGILE, OLDER DRIVERS. :14 / :52</p>
<p>Close shot of new dummy</p>	<p><i>"We're doing some studies to look at how strong are their ribs, how do they interact with the seatbelt, potentially with airbags, in a side impact scenario."</i> :11</p>
<p>John Bolte (CG'd earlier)</p>	<p>BOLTE SAYS EVEN MINOR ACCIDENTS OFTEN CAUSE INJURIES ALONG THE SEATBELT LINE - IN THE COLLAR BONE, RIBS AND PELVIS - AND IN YOUNGER DRIVERS, THAT'S RARELY SERIOUS. :08</p>
<p>Shots of Bolte at computer</p>	<p><i>"But someone that's older, a couple rib fractures, flail chest, problems breathing, pneumonia - it can really build up and cause a lot more issues."</i> :07</p>
<p>John Bolte (CG'd earlier)</p>	<p>STUDIES SHOW OLDER DRIVERS INVOLVED IN SERIOUS ACCIDENTS WERE WEARING SEAT BELTS MORE THAN ANY OTHER AGE GROUP,¹ BUT BECAUSE THEY'RE MORE FRAGILE, THEY'RE LESS LIKELY TO SURVIVE.³</p>
<p>Shots of crash test / seat belt</p>	<p>WHICH IS WHY EXPERTS HERE ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE THE VERY SYSTEMS DESIGNED TO PROTECT THEM. AT OHIO STATE WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER, THIS IS CLARK POWELL REPORTING. :17</p>
<p>Shot of Helen pulling in and parking car</p>	<p>EXPERTS SAY THIS RESEARCH COULD EVEN LEAD TO KEY FOBS THAT KNOW A DRIVER'S AGE, HEIGHT AND WEIGHT, AND CAN ADJUST A CAR'S SEAT BELTS ACCORDINGLY, THE MOMENT THEY GET INTO THE CAR.</p>
<p>(PACKAGE END) -----</p>	<p>THAT'S STILL A FEW YEARS AWAY, BUT WORKING ON IT NOW IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE BY 2030, THERE WILL BE MORE THAN 60 MILLION LICENSED DRIVERS OVER THE AGE OF 65.⁴</p>
<p>ANCHOR TAG</p>	

SOCIAL MEDIA

<p> Share it! Suggested tweet:</p>	<p>Researchers at @OSUWexMed are helping design new seat belts to better protect older drivers. bit.ly/2fWcRkb</p> <hr/>
<p> Suggested post:</p>	<p>When seat belts were first required by law, they were designed to protect the “average” driver, which at the time was a 40-year-old man. Times have changed but seat belts haven’t. Today, there are 36 million drivers on the road over the age of 65 and outdated seatbelt designs can cause serious injuries, even in minor crashes. See how researchers at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center are teaming up with automakers to come up with new seat belt designs to protect older drivers. bit.ly/2fWcRkb</p>

EXTRA BITES

<p>CG: John Bolte, PhD Ohio State College of Medicine</p>	<p>Bolte outlines injuries likely to occur in older drivers: <i>“That’s where most of your injuries are going to occur, along the path of the belt. You can have several rib fractures.”</i></p> <p>Bolte talks about understanding injuries in older drivers: <i>“Once we understand those differences, it will help scientists and seatbelt designers, airbag designers, perhaps tweak the belts, the force of the belts, come out at the air bag to better protect that elderly occupant.”</i></p>
<p>CG: Helen Kessler Older Driver</p>	<p>Bolte talks about future applications of this research: <i>“It’s really interesting. This research could lead to, an example would be your key fob would know who you are, your properties when you sit in and your car could adjust.”</i></p> <p>Helen says she’s heard of older drivers hurt in minor accidents: <i>“People get hurt with the airbags and I don’t know again, maybe their seat belts don’t fit good and they don’t hold them back good enough. I don’t know.”</i></p> <p>Helen describes her issues with properly fitting seat belts: <i>“By the time I get done driving, maybe I scoot around too much or I’m listening to the music, and by time I get done, it’s up closer to my neck. And I just keep pulling it down.”</i></p>

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References

¹*Injury Prevention and Control: Motor Vehicle Safety*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 2016. Online: http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/older_adult_drivers/

²*Road traffic injuries in the elderly*, **Emergency Medicine Journal**, January 2006. Online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2564127/>

³*How Many People Are Injured and Killed as a Result of Aging? Frailty, Fragility, and the Elderly Risk-Exposure Tradeoff Assessed via a Risk Saturation Model*, **Annals of Automotive Medicine**, Volume 53, October 2009. Online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3256801/>

⁴*Senior Driver Safety*, **American Automobile Association**, November 2016. Online: <http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/senior-driver-safety/#.WDNHS-ErJHc>

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