Helping Your Loved One with Low Vision

Try and remember that whether vision loss is sudden or gradual people commonly experience anxiety, depression, confusion and loss of independence. You, as a spouse or loved one, play a significant role in helping that person adjust to their impairment and their ability to remain independent.

You can help your loved one by following the key points below:

1. Encourage independence and self-confidence. Do not assist with daily living tasks that your loved one can complete alone. It is very common to want to help or “take over” certain tasks for your loved one but in reality this actually makes rehabilitation more difficult for the person who has vision loss.

2. Encourage your loved one to ask for help when necessary.

3. Discuss openly difficulties and work together to find solutions.

4. When communicating with your loved one, remember that communication is both verbal and non-verbal (facial expressions, head nodding and hand gestures) and your visually impaired loved one may not be able to see these movements. This can pose a challenge when talking to a person that is visually impaired.
5. Keep your voice at normal levels unless the visually impaired person is also hearing impaired.

6. Keep your home organized so that things can be found easily.

7. Do not move household objects or furniture without your loved ones knowledge.

8. Keep objects and papers off of the floor as this can pose serious safety issues.

9. During a high anxiety situation such as an eye examination or doctors appointments most people will not remember all of the information presented and discussed. If possible, be with your loved one (with their permission) to all examinations and rehab appointments. Two sets of ears are better than one.
**Lighting Tips for Low Vision Patients**

1. Increase illumination. Use floor or table lamps, illuminated magnifiers and flashlights. As we age, we require more light to see well. A visually impaired person may require even more lighting.

2. Decrease glare from lighting. Glare can reduce vision and cause fatigue. You may be prescribed special tints for indoor and outdoor use.

3. Use goose-neck lamps to provide good illumination. These lamps are adjustable so they do not increase additional glare.
Low Vision Medication Safety Tips

- Attach a white label with large black print to medication bottles

- Place your pills on a contrasting color mat so that they will be visible. White pills on a counter top are hard to see.

- Use hand magnifiers to see print.

- Use a talking recorder that is made for medicine bottles such as Script Talk (provided at a VA pharmacy) that can record your medicine name and dosage.

- Use a medicine organizer. These are available in large print.
Low Vision Safety Tips for the Home

1. Area rugs can be used to define areas but the edges should be tacked down to prevent tripping and falling.

2. Floor coverings can be a help or a hindrance some things to remember:
   - plain floor covering rather than patterned floor coverings is easier to visualize
   - thresholds should not be more than ¼ inch high to prevent tripping

3. To increase safety and visibility using stairs localized lighting (like in movie theaters) can be helpful.

4. Make sure the handrail to the steps is visible in a contrasting color from the wall.

5. Most falls happen on the top stair step so this step should be marked with a different color or illuminated to make contrast. This is also a good idea for the last step as well.

6. Use track lighting in hallway or a chair/guide rail to act as a guide.

7. Install a runner in a contrasting color down the center of a hallway to serve as guide. **BE SURE TO TACK DOWN THE EDGES TO AVOID TRIPPING.**
8. Use different textures in halls and adjacent rooms to provide tactile cues.

9. When purchasing tables, consider using ovals or round tables to avoid hitting sharp corners in the event of a fall.
Low Vision Tips for in the Kitchen

Eating

1. Use dishes that have dark side and light side to provide contrast to your food.

2. Avoid patterns on dinnerware.

3. Use placemats or table clothes to increase contrast.

4. Do NOT use clear glasses or dishes as they appear invisible.

5. Use a goose neck lamp directly over your plate.

6. Have a system for placing food on the plate, for example, meat at 6:00, potatoes at 9:00 and vegetables at 3:00.

7. Eat food inward from the edge to avoid pushing food on the table.
Low Vision Tips for in the Kitchen

Cooking

1. To avoid burns, get in the habit of shutting the burner off before removing food. **Know the off position of the stove knobs.**

2. To judge liquid levels, use pots or containers with a white interior to see dark colored liquids and black interiors with white liquids.

3. Attach lights to underside of cabinets to improve illumination. Try not to create glare.

4. Organize shelves systematically and in alphabetical order.

5. Have a system for locating food in the pantry and refrigerator.

6. Do not wear loose clothing that could catch on fire.

7. Turn pan handles inward from the stove or counter to avoid spills and burns.

8. Use Corel or plastic dishes if you are worried about broken glass.

9. Set a timer or turn on a light to remind you that the stove or oven is on.
10. Mark dials on microwave, stove and refrigerators.

11. Use special aids for the kitchen:

- Large print kitchen timer
- Cutting board with a black side and a white side to enhance contrast
- Special measuring cups that enhance contrast
- Use a knife with an adjustable slicing guide
- Use an audible liquid level guide when pouring
Low Vision Tips for the Home Workshop

- Use good lighting. Many workshops do not have many windows, and lighting is very important when it comes to making near tasks easier.

- Use a swing arm or gooseneck lamp that can be placed over tools and machines while they are being used.

- Organize tools and mark with larger numbers or bump dots so they are easily located.

- Put contrasting tape on the handles of tools for easy visibility.

- Use a large print measuring tape.

- Make measuring marks with a felt tip pen for heavy black lines that are easier to see.

- Use magnifiers on a gooseneck stand to provide magnification.

- USE SAFETY GOGGLES at all times.
Low Vision Tips for watching Television

1. To see your television more clearly, adjust the room lighting to avoid glare that interferes with the images on the television.

2. Sit closer to the television. Sitting one foot in front of the TV will **NOT** hurt your eyes.

3. Use a large print television remote control or mark your remote control for greater visibility.

4. To see your TV more clearly, place it in front of your recliner or buy a larger TV. A high definition television has the most contrast and resolution and may be easier to see.

5. Open or close drapes or curtains to adjust for glare. Some people will find that bright illumination is helpful while others find it increases glare problems.
Low Vision Tips for Writing

1. To make print easier to see, use a black felt marker (such as a Sharpie) or a gel pen.

2. Use special heavy lined paper made specifically for people with vision impairment.

3. Place light colored paper on a dark surface to help define the edges.

4. Use writing templates for envelopes, checks and writing paper.

5. Use large print checks or checks with tactile lines.

6. Use large print address books to keep track of phone numbers.

7. Use large print calendars or voice memo recorders to keep track of appointments or important dates.
Low Vision Tips for Identifying Money

Carry money in a certain order and way can help to avoid making an expensive mistake. The following order is recommended by our clinic:

- Keep one (1) dollar bills unfolded

- Keep the five (5) dollar bill behind the one dollar bills folded in half with the short side together

- Keep the ten (10) dollar bill behind the five dollar bills and folded in half with the long sides together

- Keep the twenty (20) dollar bills behind the ten dollar bills and fold one corner down

- For larger denominations keep these in a separate location in your wallet or billfold

- For coin identification remember “smaller is smooth”
  Larger coins such as dimes, quarters and half dollars have a serrated or rough edge.
Safety in Traveling Outside of Your Home

- Wear comfortable and supportive shoes.

- Plan your outings before you leave. Identify landmarks that are easy for you to find and use them as reference points.

- Cross streets only at cross walks. If you are uncertain if it is safe to cross, ask for assistance.

- If you are traveling with a companion, hold onto their arm just above their elbow for ease in guidance.
Increasing Font Size in Microsoft Outlook

1. Open Outlook.

2. Click on Tools tab on the toolbar.

3. Click on Options.

4. Click on Mail Format tab.

5. On this page, under stationary and fonts, click on Fonts button.

6. Click on choose Font. At this point you can choose the font that is easiest for you to read.

7. Click the Font style. Again, choose the style that is easiest to see. Bold is often the best option for this choice.

8. Choose size of font. 15 is the largest font choice.

9. Click OK.

10. You will now be returned to the original Font page. Do steps 6 through 9 on each button that says choose Font.

11. Under Stationery Fonts click on the button that says “Always use my fonts”
12. Click OK.

13. Click Apply.

14. Click OK.

This should then always default to the larger font for incoming and outgoing messages that you send and receive.