

**MAXIMIZE
YOUR
VISION**




eye
on **AMD**™

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INTRODUCTION

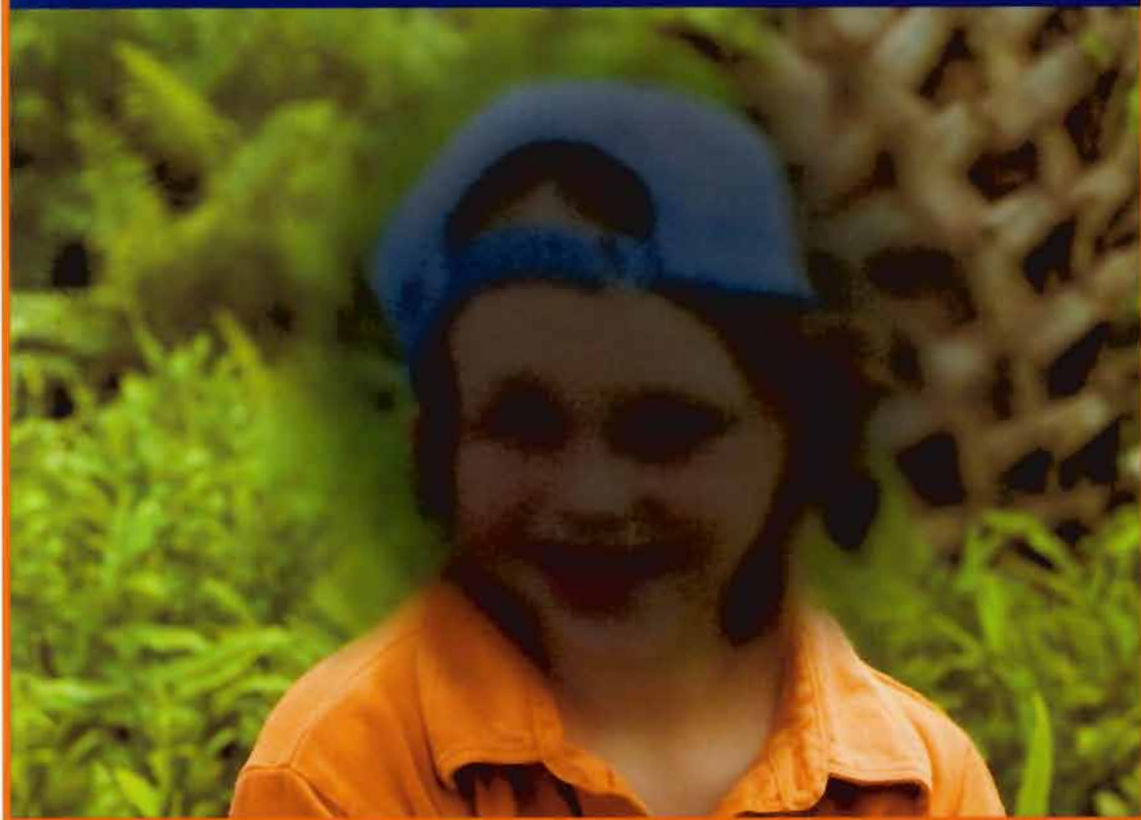
This booklet contains information to help you understand how wet AMD can affect your vision, and outlines some very simple strategies for coping and adapting to some of the vision changes - and life challenges - that may be encountered by anyone with wet AMD. Knowledge is power.

A bright, non-glare task lamp is indispensable for reading and when doing other detailed tasks.



If you have wet AMD, you may have experienced difficulty doing some of the things that you had never before thought twice about...like reading or recognizing a friend's face. This is because wet AMD affects your macula, which is responsible for your central vision and is the part needed to see straight-ahead and perform detail-oriented tasks. Even after treatment by your retina specialist, some central vision loss can be permanent. However, your peripheral, or side vision, is usually not affected.

**Wet AMD affects central vision only.
Peripheral vision is usually not affected.**



Maximizing your vision means getting more out of the vision you have. That can be as simple as learning how to do everyday things a little differently or, depending on the amount of your vision loss, introducing magnifiers and other visual aids into your daily life. By doing so, you may be able to continue doing the things you have always enjoyed.

Vision loss from wet AMD affects everyone differently. In this booklet, a variety of tips and suggestions are presented that may help you adapt to life with vision loss, or low vision as it is also known. You may find some but not all of them helpful because everyone and every situation is different.

Simple magnifiers can help with reading small print.



Families, friends and caregivers of someone with wet AMD will also find this booklet very helpful because they too can be affected by their loved one's vision loss. And they too can play an important role in helping their loved one to continue leading a productive life.

Contrast-enhancing glasses, not sunglasses, are a must when traveling outdoors.



WET AMD AND VISUAL FUNCTION

You are probably familiar with visual acuity, or VA. VA is a very important measurement that your retina specialist uses to track changes in your vision. It measures your ability to read solid black letters of various sizes on a plain white background in good lighting conditions, but it doesn't provide the complete picture of your vision because the world we live in is not just black and white. It comes in many colors, shades and textures, with varying degrees of light and dark. Your VA is only one part of your visual function, or how well you can see and go about your daily life with the vision you have.

If you have wet AMD, there are a number of other factors that may affect how well you see. These include the size and position of any blind spots (scotomas), your contrast sensitivity, glare sensitivity, depth perception and color perception. These factors all contribute in varying degrees to your visual function.

Blind Spots

Permanent central blind spots, or "missing vision", are common in people with long-standing wet AMD. They make it extremely difficult to see things directly in front of them, such as words in a book or a person's face.

Contrast Sensitivity

Many people with wet AMD can experience a loss of contrast sensitivity, which is the degree to which you can distinguish contrast in the world around you. With poor contrast sensitivity, a colorful magazine will be much more difficult to read than something printed in black and white. Distance

**Simulation of
poor contrast**



Normal contrast



can be harder to judge, stairs harder to navigate, and faces more difficult to recognize. Everything can appear as though you're seeing it through a haze.

Glare Sensitivity

We all know what it's like to squint when it's bright outside. Technically, it's because of blue light waves that scatter easily and cause "glare" – in other words, it's the natural light that reflects off a variety of surfaces. Indoors, glare can be created as light bounces off any shiny surface, such as a polished table top or floor for example. Fluorescent lights, in particular, can cause glare.

Sensitivity to glare is a problem for almost everyone as they get older but those with wet AMD can be especially sensitive.

Depth Perception

Two eyes are required to perceive depth, so if one of your eyes has poorer vision than the other, the imbalance may cause problems with your depth perception. Faulty depth perception can turn simple tasks like climbing stairs into a potential hazard.

Color Perception

Damage to your macula caused by wet AMD can also affect color perception. Problems distinguishing different shades of color can make it difficult to perform certain tasks such as choosing clothing or differentiating traffic lights.

The above factors don't have to be barriers to life. By manipulating various aspects of your environment as outlined in the following pages, you can maximize the vision you have.

THE FOUR KEYS TO MAXIMIZING VISION

Magnification

You may recall a time when putting on a pair of glasses would bring your world into sharp focus. Unfortunately, it's not so simple when you have wet AMD. With wet AMD, when you look directly at something, blind spots can blur, distort, obscure or completely obstruct the image, making it difficult to identify what you are looking at. Regular glasses cannot provide the necessary correction. But making things bigger can help you “see around” the central blind spots and other damage caused by wet AMD. When you magnify the object, it becomes easier for the surrounding undamaged healthy areas of your retina to see and recognize the image.

**Magnification can help the healthy parts
of your retina see the image.**



An example of magnification is the type in this booklet. It has been typeset in larger than normal type - 16 point type to be exact - which is significantly larger than your average newspaper or magazine type. People with wet AMD often lose the ability to see fine details, like small print, so using larger type makes it easier for them to read. But for others, 16 point type might not be big enough, so they need either larger type or a magnifier that can enlarge the type. Without a magnifier, it might be easier for some people to see this 20 point type and some people will find 36 point or even bigger type easier to read.

If this entire booklet were printed in such large type, it would be over 300 pages long and be quite cumbersome. Most people find that using a magnifier is a much more practical solution.

Types of Magnifying Devices

There are literally hundreds of different types of magnifiers available today for people with low vision. Choosing the right magnifiers to meet your needs is key - it's not as simple as just picking up any old magnifying glass at the local department store.

People with low vision need magnifiers that are properly matched to their visual acuity. In addition, the magnifier must be suited to the task for which it is to be used. For example, the magnifier that helps you see the dosage instructions on a prescription bottle won't help you watch television.

Most people will have several different magnifiers to help them get through their day, from small handheld magnifiers to electronic reading machines, or CCTVs. A vision rehabilitation expert can help you choose the right magnifiers and the right powers for your needs.

Different magnifiers are needed for different uses.



How to Use an Illuminated Pocket Magnifier

Pocket magnifiers are especially useful for near, quick tasks such as reading a price tag, label or menu. They are small, portable and can easily fit into your pocket or purse, yet they can be surprisingly powerful. Some pocket magnifiers can provide up to 10X (10 times) magnification, which means they can enlarge objects up to ten times their original size. Some even come with a built-in light source - a handy feature in situations with poor lighting.

Here's how to use a pocket magnifier properly:

1. If you usually wear glasses, leave them on when using your pocket magnifier
2. If equipped, switch on the built-in light
3. Position the magnifier directly in front of and close to your better seeing eye
4. Bring the object you want to see right up close to the magnifier
5. Slowly pull the object away until it comes into focus
6. The closer the magnifier is to your eye, the more you will see



Contrast Enhancement

Loss of contrast sensitivity is often a significant problem for people with wet AMD. Creating a high contrast environment using added light and stark contrasting colors is one way to cope. For example, imagine a white plate on a white countertop. For someone with poor contrast sensitivity, the plate can be very difficult to see, even in a brightly lit area. Now imagine a dark plate on the white countertop. The stark contrast in colors makes it much easier to see the plate. Using contrasting colors effectively is one simple way to cope with a loss of contrast sensitivity.

Another way to improve contrast is to wear specialized contrast enhancing glasses. Anyone who has ever tripped over a curb will appreciate the difference these glasses make when travelling outside of your contrast-enhanced home.



Contrast-enhancing glasses have specially colored lenses with UVA/UVB protection that are designed to filter out blue light which causes glare. This in turn can help increase contrast perception. These filters are usually a yellow (for indoor use) or amber color (for outdoor use) and can be worn like sunglasses, often over your regular glasses. They are also available as a clip-on attachment for existing glasses or a color tint can be added to your prescription.



Unlike regular sunglasses, contrast enhancing glasses don't block light, just glare, making them suitable for both indoors and outdoors. Almost everyone who tries them will notice the immediate benefit of increased contrast perception and reduced glare.

Illumination

Virtually everyone benefits from proper illumination or lighting. Regardless of your vision, increasing the amount of light will improve how well you can see and this becomes even more important as we get older. For people with wet AMD, good lighting not only increases the overall illumination of things,

it also helps enhance contrast. And, when good illumination is combined with magnification, it becomes much easier to accomplish many tasks than with just lighting or magnification alone.

While more light and less glare are beneficial for everyone, there is no specific formula for achieving the best light for your needs. What works for you may not work for someone else. With that in mind, be prepared to experiment with different lighting arrangements in your home to find the light that works best for you.

Try to create even lighting throughout each room, include sunlight whenever possible.



For general room lighting, most homes usually have some combination of overhead, floor lamps and table lamps. If you need more light due to your low vision, try switching to higher



powered light bulbs (minimum 100 watt) wherever possible. However, be sure to check your light fixtures' maximum bulb ratings.

You'll also benefit by taking advantage of as much sunlight as possible. It is brighter and more powerful than artificial light, provides better color contrast and makes it easier to read and perform other tasks. The major drawback of sunlight however, is the glare it can cause.

For reading and doing other detail-oriented tasks, task lighting is key to getting the most out of your vision. Look for a specially designed, low vision lamp that uses a unique compact fluorescent bulb to produce natural looking daylight indoors without the heat of a normal light bulb. A task light will help to increase contrast, improve detail definition, provide accurate color rendering and is perfect for reading or using while doing close work such as needlework or crafts.

Education

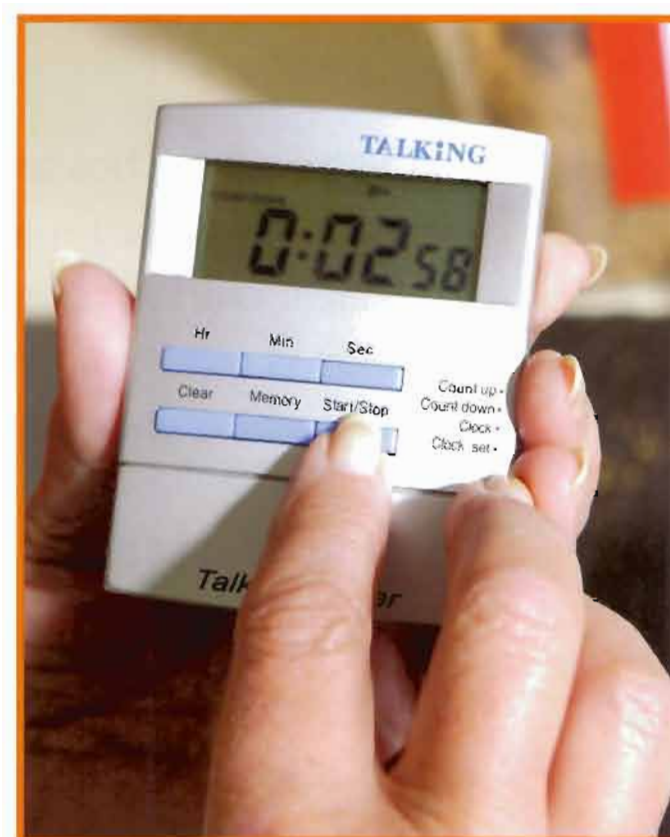
Knowledge is power. The more you know, the more you can help yourself overcome the challenges of wet AMD. This

booklet is a good starting place, as it contains a number of easy and practical things you can do to make your life with low vision a little safer and easier, but there is much more information available should you need it.

Education is especially important when it comes to vision aids. There are many innovative products available on the market designed to make life easier.

There is a wide assortment of “talking” and large print products such as “talking” alarm clocks, wrist watches, kitchen timers, bathroom scales and audio books. Large-print products include books, crossword puzzles, bank checks and other printed materials.

If you have already invested in vision aids, or plan on doing so, be sure you know how to use them correctly. Having the best equipment in the world won't be of much use if you don't know how to use it properly. This is especially true of electronic devices. Due to their high-tech nature, it can take time and practice to learn how to use all of the advanced features. However, once mastered, these products can change your outlook on living with low vision.



TIPS FOR A LOW VISION FRIENDLY HOME

Adapting your home to make your life in it safer, easier and more enjoyable will take some thought and a little time, but it will be worth it in the long run. Enlist your family or friends to help you with some of the changes you think you should make.

The following are tips and suggestions...they are by no means hard and fast rules. No one will want or need to implement everything you read here and everyone's situation is different. Read through these suggestions and consider which ones might be helpful to you.

Getting Started

It's a good idea to walk through your home and jot down the activities or issues in each room with which you are having difficulty. You can then refer to the following tips for help with those specific issues. If you can't find what you're looking for here, consult the "Resources" section in the back of this booklet for more help.

Get Organized

Organization is another important step. Get rid of clutter and extra items wherever possible. Everything should have a place and everything should always be in its place. Always put things back after using them so you know where they are the next time you need them. Ask your guests to follow this rule when they visit you as well.

General Tips

Room Lighting

- Take advantage of sunlight wherever possible. It is brighter and more powerful than artificial light, provides better color contrast and makes it much easier to read and do other tasks – but try to avoid the sun's glare



- You may have to rearrange some of your furniture to avoid glare but you'll find it's worth it to take advantage of this free source of good light

Battery operated lights are great in areas with no electrical outlet.



- Vertical blinds or sheer curtains can help to reduce sunlight's glare
- Try to balance the light throughout your home; eliminate areas of dark and light wherever possible. Add light to hallways and the spaces between rooms – track lighting can work well for this
- Whenever possible, install lights in closets, cupboards and stairwells too. Many retailers carry small lights that can easily be mounted under cupboards or on walls and other surfaces. Some are even battery powered, eliminating the need for an electrical connection
- For general room lighting, try to use a combination of overhead, floor, and table lamps. Make sure there is a task lamp wherever you read and write or do other detail oriented tasks. Replace low wattage light bulbs with higher watt bulbs; compact fluorescent bulbs can provide brighter, more even light but may not be suitable for reading

- Adjusting to sudden light levels can take time; when light changes occur, remain still until your eyes adjust

Task Lighting

- For more detail-oriented needs, use small task lights with a gooseneck or other articulating features that can be aimed directly at the job to be done
- Task lamps with special low vision compact fluorescent bulbs are best. They provide even, natural-looking light with no glare and do not generate significant heat like incandescent or halogen bulbs do
- Position the light between your eyes and the work you are doing – not over your shoulder



- Consider multiple task lights throughout your home in the areas where you do detail-oriented tasks or get one that's easy to transport as you'll need it in just about every room – the kitchen for reading recipes, measuring ingredients and setting oven dials; the laundry room; your bedside table and wherever else you read and write, knit, sew, etc.

Organization

- Make sure everything has a place and is always put back in its place – once something is misplaced, it can be very difficult to find, especially smaller objects
- Label various products in large black print on a white label, piece of paper or index card and secure with elastic bands



- Label all toxic items such as cleaning products and store them in a separate location to avoid mix ups
- Label clothing with tags indicating their color

- Organize your belongings into groups that make sense to you

Your Front Door Area

- Always keep your keys in the same order on a key fob or ring or use a colored rubber ring around your front door key so you can easily “feel” which one it is
- Your sense of touch can also help you put the key in the lock; place your index finger of one hand beside the keyhole and guide the key in to place with other hand
- Mark porch steps with paint or bright tape to distinguish stairs
- If you have a doormat, inside or out, make sure it's rubber backed to prevent it from slipping



- If you live in an apartment building, hang a large wreath or other decorative object to help you identify your door
- Ensure there is always adequate light outside your front door; a motion sensor light is a good idea
- Install a light in your front hall closet; battery operated lights can work well when there is no electric power in the closet
- Determine a system of arranging the articles in your hall closet that works for you; use a clothes pin to clip shoes, boots and gloves together in pairs; keep your umbrella, hats and scarves in a consistent location on a shelf



The Living Room

- Re-arrange your furniture, if necessary, to avoid obstacles that might be tripped over, such as coffee tables or footstools
- Avoid area rugs altogether or ensure they have a non-slip backing and the edges are secured to the floor to avoid tripping
- Create contrast with color wherever possible:
 - Place contrasting colored towels or fabric over the backs and arms of chairs
 - Use contrasting or brightly colored throw pillows on sofas and chairs to help identify places to sit
 - Cover shiny surfaces like coffee tables with a contrasting colored tablecloth to highlight its location and reduce glare





- Use dark colored switch plates and electrical outlet covers that contrast with your wall color or outline your existing switch plates with contrasting colored tape
- Use oval or round coffee tables to avoid stumbling against sharp corners
- Create even light throughout your living room:
 - Install vertical blinds or sheers to reduce glare from outside whenever necessary
 - Use a combination of floor lamps that direct light up to reflect off the ceiling; table lamps with light colored shades to eliminate the glare; and task lights near your favorite chairs where you read or do other work
- Secure electrical cords against the walls or behind furniture with tape

- Watching Television

- Position your television to avoid glare from exterior windows or put it on a cart with wheels so it can be moved into the best viewing position
- Do not watch television in a dark room - make sure the lighting is even throughout
- Use a large button remote control. If you have more than one remote, use tape to label them clearly
- Sit closer to the TV if necessary or get a large screen TV
- Use specially designed low vision TV glasses to magnify the image





- Reading
 - Always use a task lamp
 - A lap desk can be helpful especially if you use a hand-held magnifier
 - Reading guides are available to help keep your place on the page – an ordinary ruler can also work
 - Look for large print books and publications
 - Consider audio books on tape, disc or Podcast
 - Telephone reading services of various newspapers and other publications are available in many areas



- Computer Use
 - Face the monitor away from sources of glare
 - Use an adapted, large-key, high contrast keyboard

- Use magnification software that enlarges text and images clearly and that can read text aloud
- Voice recognition software allows you to dictate text into your computer

Dining Areas

- Use a solid colored table cloth to reduce glare from shiny table tops
- Create a place setting for yourself that uses contrasting solid colored dishes against the table cloth or placemat. Alternate colored dishes i.e. use a light colored bowl on a dark plate
- Have a light and dark place setting of dishes to create contrast with your food as well; serve light foods on dark dishes and dark foods on light dishes; alternate these with contrasting placemats
- Keep a task lamp at the place where you always sit to dine



The Kitchen

- A kitchen should be bright and glare-free. Good lighting is required wherever repetitive tasks occur, such as over the sink, oven, microwave and counters. In reading and preparation areas, extra light without shadows is important
 - Mount fluorescent strip lights on top of cabinets to provide glare-free general lighting by bouncing light off the ceiling
 - To illuminate countertops, mount fluorescent strip lights on the underside of cabinets but make sure they are hidden from view (close to the wall) to avoid glare when you are standing at the counter

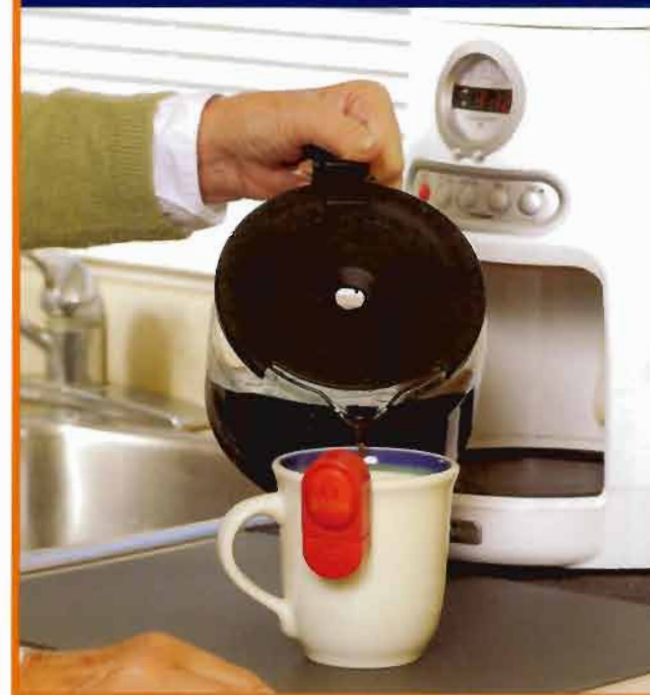
Fluorescent strip lights mounted under cupboards illuminate countertops.



- A recessed down-light with a halogen floodlight or narrow floodlight bulb centered over the sink makes washing dishes and preparing food easier
- Task lights are indispensable when reading recipes or measuring ingredients. However, avoid placing free-standing task lights near the sink
- Keep cupboards well organized with everything labeled in large black print; get into the habit of labeling things immediately on return from shopping and then put them away according to your preferred system
- Use packaged mixes and other convenience items for easier preparation
- Use an audible liquid level guide for pouring liquids – especially hot liquids



Audible liquid level indicators can help prevent burns.



- A portable handheld-magnifier for reading recipe instructions is handy
- When purchasing new appliances and devices, look for those with control buttons or dials that can be marked with stick-on raised dots or tape. Appliances with digital displays can't be marked or labeled as easily
- Use contrasting colored tape and stick-on raised dots at the 'off' and '350 degree' mark on your oven dial. The raised dot and your sense of touch make it easier to set the oven temperature
- The microwave oven can be modified with stick-on raised dots as well. By placing the dots on the most common buttons, it becomes easy to operate by feel when combined with the audible microwave beeps



- Working with a hot oven and stove requires special care - always use a good pair of extra-long oven mitts that cover your entire forearm. A wooden push/pull stick can help you manipulate the hot oven rack safely, helping to prevent burns
- Use plastic or other non-breakable mixing bowls
- Use a talking timer
- Use brightly colored utensils and cookware that contrast with your countertop or use a light or dark colored rubberized mat to create contrast
- Measuring ingredients can be accomplished with a combination of brightly colored utensils and your sense of touch



- Using a sharp knife to slice food can be dangerous. Adjustable knife-guides are available
- Create a safe, high-contrast work area by placing a white cutting board on a dark cloth on a light counter when using dark colored foods; use the opposite arrangement when using light colored foods



- Placing contrasting colored tape on the insides or backs of cabinet doors can make it easier to tell if one is open
- Install contrasting knobs or handles on cupboards
- As food cooks, odors change. Often you can smell when something is done, for example, when cookies are baked

- Small countertop appliances - including toaster ovens, coffeemakers and microwaves - may be safer and easier to use for heating food than the oven or stove
- Smell spices before you sprinkle. There's nothing like mistaking pepper for cinnamon
- Push chairs under tables and keep cupboard doors closed
- Use tape to outline countertop borders and edges, refrigerator and stove handles, cupboards and handles of pots and pans
- Here are some other kitchen safety tips that everyone should follow:
 - Do not wear long sleeves or loose clothing in the kitchen
 - Keep a fire extinguisher handy and know how to use it
 - Turn pan handles inward from the stove and countertops



The Bathroom

- Lighting
 - Your bathroom should have bright uniform light that's shadow and glare-free. Experiment with different types of light bulbs and fixtures until you find the ones that work for you
 - Keep a task light nearby but keep it away from the tub or sink
 - Use a wet-location-rated shower light, recessed in the ceiling above the tub. Fix it on a separate switch, so it can be used in the middle of the night as a less intense bathroom night light



- Install a non-shiny vanity countertop made of light colors to reflect light to the underside of your chin or use a light colored towel
- Ask your pharmacist for large print medicine bottle labels
- Keep a small hand-held magnifier on the counter to use for help with reading prescription bottle labels or any other small items in the bathroom

- Use a large print monthly pill dispenser and keep it on a contrasting colored mat, which makes the individual pills easier to see
- Use a liquid level indicator



- Applying make-up or shaving is made much easier when using a magnifying mirror. One with optical quality glass will help to ensure that it doesn't distort the image
- Use an electric razor
- When applying toothpaste, place your index finger next to the bristles of your toothbrush as a guide for applying the right amount of toothpaste and keeping the paste in place

- Remember color contrast techniques. Select a toothbrush color that varies from the color of your countertop, or place your toothbrush on a washcloth of contrasting color when dispensing toothpaste. If your toothbrush bristles are white, use colored toothpaste
- Consider labeling your makeup by colors or seasons
- Use solid colored towels, seat covers, tissue boxes and other accessories that contrast with your wall color
- Use nail polish to label medicine caps using a bright color code system



- Install and wrap safety grab-bars by toilet and in the shower/area in bright colored contrasting tape
- Use a non-slip contrasting colored bath mat and drape it over the edge of the tub when not in use
- Use bright tape to mark the desired settings on the shower or bath faucets
- In the bath, mark the tub at your desired water level with a contrasting colored mark and fill the tub to that level. Or you can float a contrasting colored sponge in the water making it easier to judge the water level
- Use a talking weigh scale
- Use liquid soap in a dispenser, soap-on-a-rope, or use a dark or light colored bar of soap that contrasts with your sink and tub

The Bedroom

- Keep a night light on throughout the night
- Remove all obstacles between your bedside and the bathroom, including any accent rugs, to help avoid falls in the night when using the bathroom
- Have a gooseneck or articulating task light by your bedside for reading
- Use a talking alarm clock

- Always ensure dresser drawers and closet doors are closed after using
- Put dividers in your dresser drawers to separate items
- Install lighting in your clothes closet; use battery powered lights if necessary
- Group clothing by color in the closet with large print tags to help identify them; arrange them by alternating light and dark colors
- Shoes should be grouped and pegged together using ordinary clothes pins
- Pre-arrange several outfits and hang them in separate areas of the closet



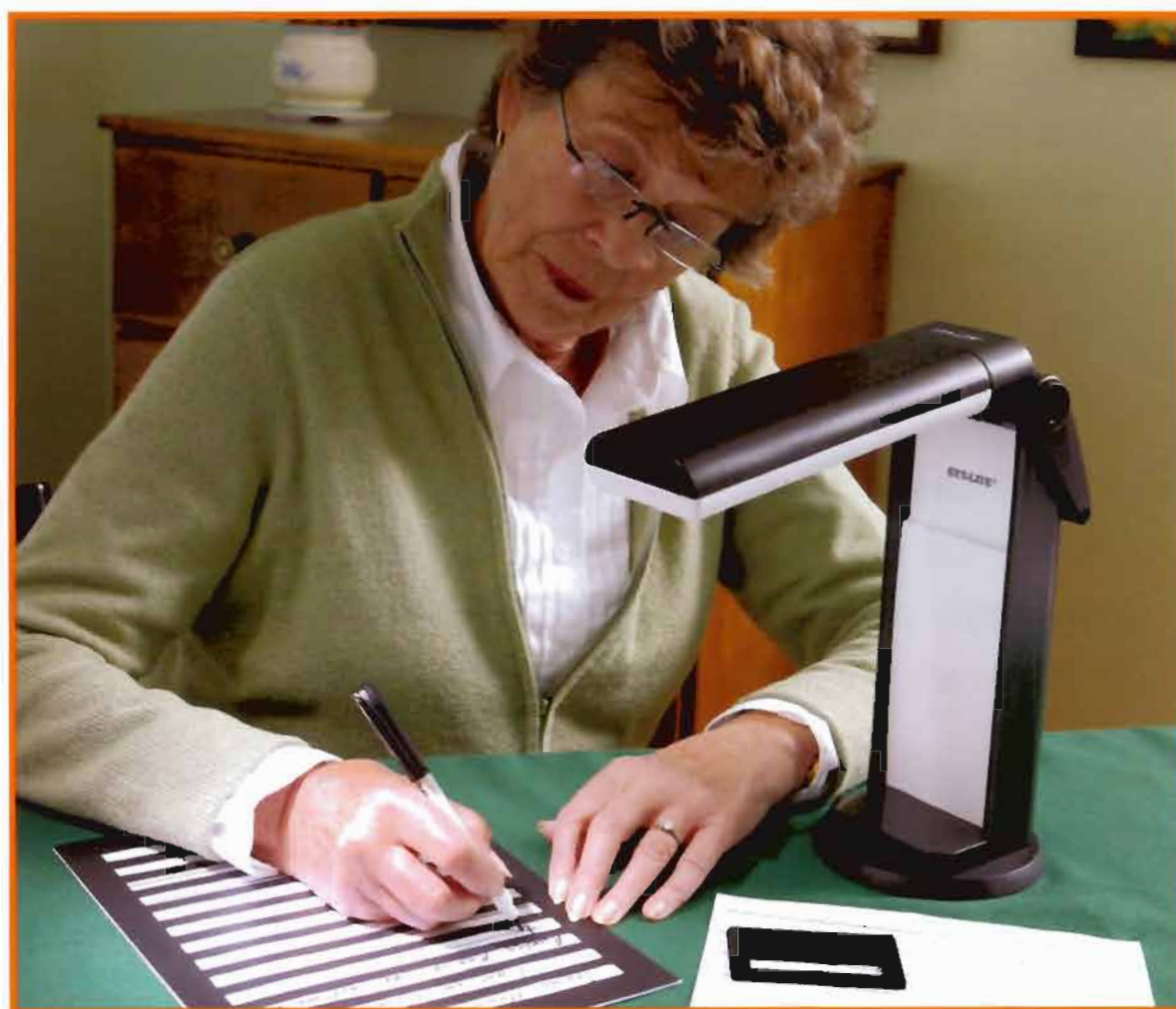
Common Areas

- Install lighting in dark hallways to maintain a consistent light level from room to room; track lighting is a good option
- Avoid area rugs or ensure they are non-slip and have the edges taped down to avoid tripping
- Replace or repair torn or ragged carpets, linoleum or tiles
- Stairs can be a hazard – ensure stairwells are well-lit and mark the edge of at least the first and last stair with contrasting paint, safety tape or tread strips to highlight them
- Install handrails on both sides of stairways; paint them a contrasting color
- If possible, remove thresholds and door sills or paint them a contrasting color



Tips for Everyday Living

- To write letters, pay bills, etc., place your paper on a contrasting surface and use a task light. Use bold lined paper if necessary and a black felt-tip marker to see what you are writing; use a writing guide which is a template made of plastic or metal that helps guide your writing
- Ask your bank for large print checks and deposit books
- Get a telephone with large print push buttons; a cordless large print telephone with high contrast numbers makes it even easier to dial out



Outside the Home

- Never leave home without contrast enhancing glasses – they will help increase contrast and reduce glare; grocery stores have especially bright, glare-producing light
- Never leave home without an illuminated pocket or hand-held magnifier – you'll need it to help read price tags, food labels or menus in poorly lit environments
- Wearing a hat with a visor helps cut glare both outdoors and indoors where there is bright fluorescent overhead lighting such as in grocery stores
- In restaurants, don't be embarrassed to make special requests. Ask to sit with your back to a window so the light falls on the menu and your plate, or ask for a well-lit table. And ask your server to read the check aloud to you since they're often next to impossible to read, even if your vision is perfect!

RESOURCES:

We hope that you have found, or will find, at least some of the information contained in this booklet to be of help to you in maximizing your vision. If you are in need of more information or need additional assistance managing your particular vision challenges, ask your retina specialist for guidance or contact some of the organizations listed below. Do not be alarmed by the word “blind” in some of these organizations’ names. They all provide low vision services to those in need.

AMD Alliance International

www.amdalliance.org

Tel: (877) AMD-7171

American Foundation for the Blind’s “Senior Site”

www.afb.org/seniorsitehome.asp

Tel: (800) AFB-LINE (800-232-5463)

Foundation Fighting Blindness

www.blindness.org

Tel: (800) 683-5555

MD Partnership

Tel: (888) 430-9898

Are You Aware? “Self help for vision loss”

www.visionaware.org

MD Support

www.mdsupport.org

**National Eye Health Education Program
of National Institutes of Health**

www.nei.nih.gov

National Federation of the Blind

www.nfb.org

Tel: 410-659-9314

Prevent Blindness America

www.preventblindness.org

Tel: (800) 331-2020

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Blind Rehabilitation Service

www.va.gov/blindrehab

Tel: (877) 222-8387

VisionConnection - Lighthouse International

www.visionconnection.org

Tel: (800) 829-0500

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