



# Living with sight loss

Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

Living with any eye condition means you may need to adapt your lifestyle to changes in your vision.

This booklet aims to help you to stay as independent as possible, enabling you to be in control of your surroundings.

We aim to suggest some tips that you and your family may find helpful.

# Contents page:

<b>4 Core principles .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>In the kitchen .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>In the bathroom .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>In the bedroom.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>In the living room .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Hallways and stairs .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>In the garden .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Getting out and visual impairment teams .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Apps .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Gadgets .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Charities and organisations.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Benefits and concessions .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>I have a visual impairment cut-out.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Visual Impairment Passport .....</b>	<b>27</b>

# Four core principles

When diagnosed with a sight threatening condition these four principles can be used as a guidance on how to improve your home and adapt your surroundings. This enables you to maintain your independence and make you feel more comfortable and safe in your own home.



## Light

Let's brighten things up! Most people with sight loss find that increasing the amount of light in their home helps. However, for some eye conditions, such as cataracts and retinitis pigmentosa, glare from bright light is a problem. **It is important to use the lighting which is appropriate for you.**

## Natural light

Increase the amount of daylight which enters your home. This may mean installing new curtains or blinds. However, be careful that increasing the light, for example when the sun shines straight into a room, does not cause glare. You can use blackout curtains, roller blinds or vertical blinds to control sun glare.

# General or ambient light

General light should be as bright and evenly spread as possible so that you do not have difficulties getting used to different light levels as you move from room to room. Try fitting bulbs that give more light and/or changing shades so that they do not block the light or create glare by giving a direct view of the lamp. You could add ceiling and/or wall lights to spread the light around a room to reduce shadows and dark areas. You can also try uplighters.

## Task lighting

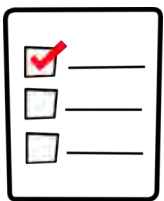
A task light is a light that you can aim down on to whatever you are working on, which is not going to glare in your eyes.

Task lighting can be used for specific tasks and activities like reading, crafts, cooking or any other close work. You can also put lights in wardrobes and cupboards to help see the contents.

The best position for a reading light is between your head and the book you are reading. You do not have to spend a lot on the reading lights advertised in the weekend newspapers, suitable lights are readily available in local shops or online. You can have a floor standing lamp or one that sits on furniture. Fluorescent and LED lights give good light. Fluorescent and LED lights do not get hot. Some people benefit from what is called a 'full spectrum' light. You may want to try different lights to see which type you prefer, but in our experience most people simply need more light.

# **Contrast**

Be bold! Make the most of contrast and bold colours to highlight and outline different edges and objects so that you can see them better. For instance, try using a dark chopping board for chopping onions so that they show up. You could repaint your stair handrails so that they are a different colour from the walls and you can see them more easily.



# **Organisation**

- Reduce clutter
- Bold labelling
- Put things back where they belong



# **Visual aids**

In the Low Vision Clinic we demonstrate and provide you with visual aids that can help you with reading and close work.

This is not in the form of prescription glasses; however, we can issue you with magnification and reading aids.

We can also advise you on apps, voice/magnifying software, and gadgets that could be used around the house.



# In the kitchen

The kitchen is a vital part of the household, where safety is essential.

We want to ensure you don't lose your confidence. Making small changes in the kitchen will enable you to still enjoy cooking, while staying safe.

## Tips for the kitchen:



### Safety:

- Remove rugs, or replace with non-slip rugs or fix double sided tape to the back of the rug
- Avoid patterned flooring
- Use finger guards or heat resistant gloves, use oven mitts



### Lighting:

- Use task lighting and under the cupboards lighting
- Increase natural lighting by removing net curtains and keeping windows clean
- Have a torch next to the bed
- Add lights inside wardrobes/cupboards

## **Contrast:**

- Use bold colours throughout the kitchen, in particular chopping boards and measuring cups
- Use solid coloured crockery and avoid clear glass and patterns
- Use bold colour placemats
- Mark cupboard edges with bright coloured tape
- Mark frequently used dials and buttons with bump on



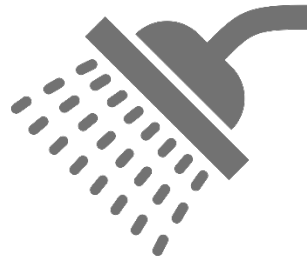
## **Organisation:**

- Use labels and sticky notes
- Place things in the same spot
- Use Penfriend voice labeller



## **Visual aids**

- Use liquid level indicator to safely prepare drinks
- Use talking kitchen gadgets (talking microwave, talking scales, talking timers, talking thermometers)
- Use magnifiers to look at the dials and to read packaging and cooking instructions



## In the bathroom

With deteriorating vision the bathroom can be a serious health hazard. With a few adjustments you can make it a safer environment.

### Tips for the bathroom:



#### **Safety:**

- Use non-slip rugs and bath mats
- Use safety handrails
- Use electric razor



#### **Lighting:**

- Use sensor / nightlight
- Make sure the shower / bath is well lit
- Use illuminated magnifying mirror for make-up / shaving

## **Contrast:**

- Outline the edges of the sink / shower / bath with bold coloured tape
- Mark bottles with bright coloured bump on stickers
- Use bright coloured bathroom accessories
- Use bold coloured sponges to gauge the water level



## **Organisation:**

- Always put things back where you found them
- Use different bottles or colours for shampoo / conditioner / shower gel
- Use Penfriend voice labeller



## **Visual aids**

- Use illuminated magnifying mirror for make-up / shaving
- Use talking weighing scales



## In the bedroom

Sweet dreams! Your bedroom is the place where you should be able to rest and relax. With these few tips you can make it a more comfortable and secure space.

### Tips for the bedroom:



#### **Safety:**

- Use non-slip slippers
- Avoid patterned rugs, flooring, wallpaper and bedding
- Clear clutter



#### **Lighting:**

- Use bedside task lights for reading or close work#
- Install nightlight / sensor light if needed
- Keep a torch next to the bed
- Add lights inside wardrobes / cupboards

## **Contrast:**

- Outline furniture edges with bold coloured tape
- Mark light switches, curtain pulls / drawer handles with bright coloured tape



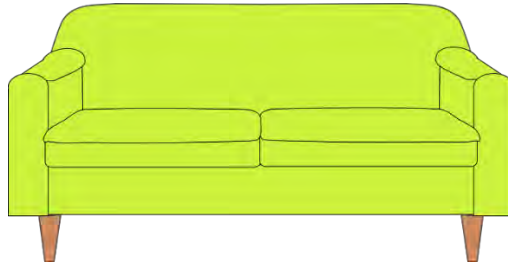
## **Organisation:**

- Remove clutter
- Organise clothing by type / colour
- Place clothes where they belong
- Use drawer dividers



## **Visual aids**

- Use a colour detector
- Use a talking clock



## In the living room

Time to put your feet up! This is where you spend most of your day, so with just few changes you can feel in control.

### Tips for the living room:



#### **Safety:**

- Avoid patterned rugs and flooring
- Remove rugs if possible
- Be careful with the cords and cables



#### **Lighting:**

- Use as much natural and general lighting as possible
- Try sitting next to a window to read
- Use a task light for reading and close work
- Position the TV away from windows.

## **Contrast:**

- Outline furniture, steps, thresholds with bold coloured tape
- Mark door frames, light switches, curtain pulls with bright coloured tape



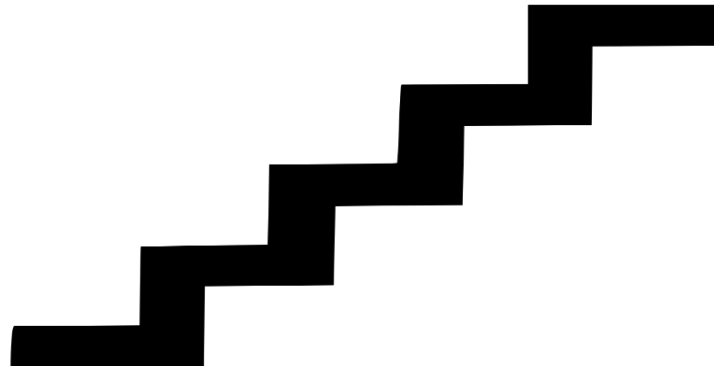
## **Organisation:**

- Remove clutter and push furniture away to create clear pathways
- Use labels and sticky notes
- Place / store objects in their allocated space



## **Visual aids**

- Use a talking clock
- Use big button telephone / remote control
- Try a bigger TV or try sitting closer
- Keep your magnifier close to hand
- Try voice activated gadgets like Alexa or Google Home
- Use bump on sticker for central heating thermostat dial



# Hallways and stairways

Tips for hallways and stairways:



## Safety:

- Install handrails
- Remove unnecessary furniture
- Be aware of the number of steps on the stairway



## Lighting:

- Always switch on the light.
- Keep a torch to hand.

## **Contrast:**

- Outline steps and handrails with high contrast tape
- Mark the bottom and top step with bump on stickers
- Mark light switches with bright coloured tape



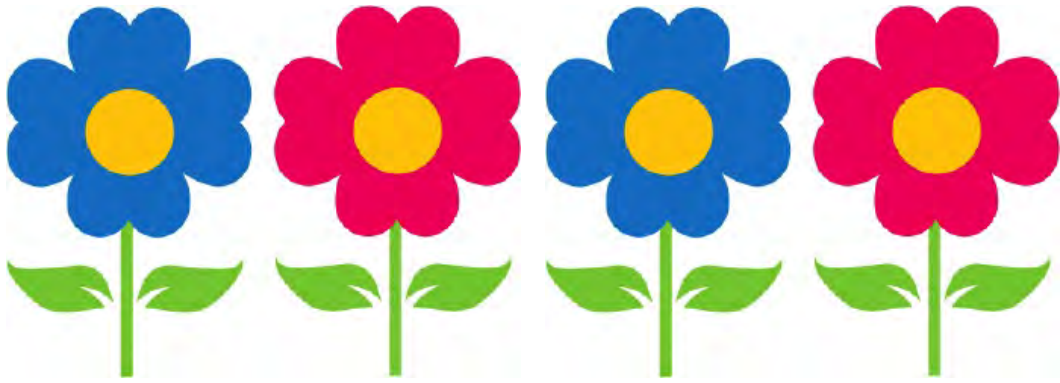
## **Organisation:**

- Remove clutter
- Always leave your keys in the same place



## **Visual aids**

- Install sensor floor lighting to help you navigate your way to the bathroom



## In the garden

### Tips for garden:



#### **Safety:**

- Install a handrail on the way out to the garden
- Install a ramp if needed
- Always have your phone / pendant alarm with you



#### **Lighting:**

- Install a sensor light.
- Carry a torch light for areas of your garden that are not well lit.

## **Contrast:**

- Mark the steps and edges of the door and patio
- Use bold colours for the plants and pots



## **Organisation:**

- Be aware of trip hazards, such as hoses and pots
- Place garden tools back in storage



## **Visual aids**

- Use UV shields / sunglasses to help with the glare
- Have your magnifier to hand



## Getting out

Your local council can arrange a specialist mobility assessment, where they can assess you for different mobility aids and offer training on how to use them.

## Visual Impairment Teams

If you require any further advice or assistance on this, we can always refer you to your local council's specialist team for a home assessment.



**Reading**

Tel: 0118 937 3747



**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

Tel: 01628 623744



## West Berkshire

Tel: 01625 503704



## Slough

Tel: 01753 475 111



## Wokingham

Tel: 0118 974 6548



## Bracknell

Tel: 01344 3520000



## Buckinghamshire

Tel: 01296 479970



## Oxfordshire

Tel: 01865 894935

# Apps

## Useful Apps:

### BeSpecular

“Let blind people see through your eyes” is their tagline. The visually impaired person takes a photo of what he or she needs help with and attaches a voice message, which is sent to a community of volunteers who interpret the picture/message and tell you what they see. **Available on: iOS and Android**



### Be My Eyes

“Lend your eyes to the blind” is their tagline. Be My Eyes is very similar to BeSpecular except you are connected through a live video connection. **Available on: iOS**



## TapTapSee

TapTapSee uses a phone's camera and VoiceOver functions to photograph objects and identify them for the user.

**Available on: iOS**



## Kindle and Audible

This fully accessible app enables you to turn your iPhone or iPad into a Kindle and carry all your eBooks and talking books with you.

**Available on: iOS, Android, PC and Mac**



## WeWALK

This navigation app is based on voice instructions. It transforms the use of the white cane into a smart cane.



# Gadgets

Most popular gadgets:



**Smart home virtual assistant**



**Tablet/Kindle**



**Smart phone**



**Talking watch**



**Talking book player**



## Charities and organisations



**Berkshire Vision**

<https://berkshirevision.org.uk/>

0118 987 2803



**Royal National institute for the Blind**

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

0303 123 9999



**Blind Veterans**

<https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/>

0300 111 22 33



## **Macular Society**

**[www.macularsociety.org](http://www.macularsociety.org)**

**0300 3030 111**



## **Guide Dogs**

**[www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)**

**0800 953 0113**



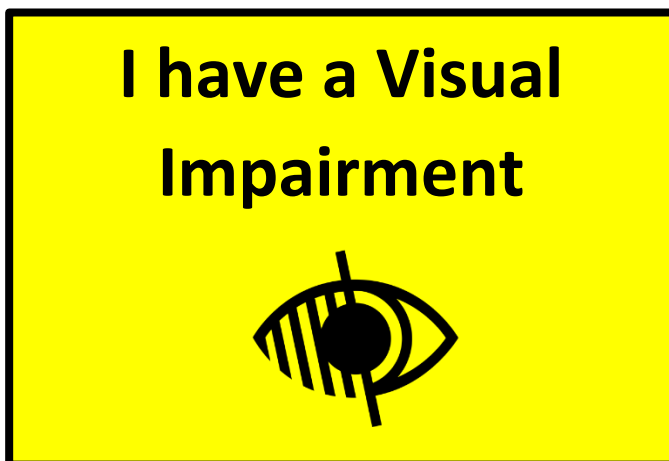
## Benefits and concessions

Some patients might be eligible for some benefits and concessions.

Please find further details on:

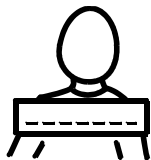
[www.rnib.org.uk/advice/money-benefits-finance](http://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/money-benefits-finance)

Tel: 0300 123 9999



Please cut this yellow square out and wear on a lanyard if you would like those around you to be made aware of your visual impairment. You can wear this when you are out in the shops, on public transport, in the hospital or when you go out and about.

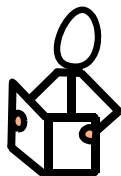
# I have low vision



Please say my name when you start to talk so that I know you are speaking to me. Please introduce yourself clearly so that I know who you are.



Please check that the lighting is appropriate to my needs.



Please don't assume that I can read any information leaflets, menus or medication that I am given. I may need support with this.



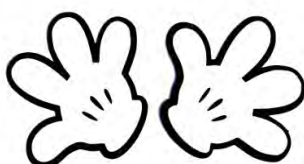
Please don't move items around me without asking me and telling me where you have put them. I may find things hard to find again.



If I need to look at something quite small, I may carry a little magnifier but you might need to remind me to use this.



Please make sure that you tell me where you have placed my food or drink. I don't want to knock things over. I might struggle with liquid levels. I might not know what is on my plate.



Please inform me before undertaking any procedure; it can be very unnerving for me to be touched without warning.

Visit: [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

Produced by RBFT Ophthalmology

Sarah Short, Sonya Nikchevska and Marianne Burgess

July 2020.

Reviewed: July 2026

Next review due: July 2028