

# Support Services and Adaptive Devices for Older Adults with Low Vision

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## What is Low Vision?

- As defined by the American Foundation for the Blind<sup>1</sup>:
  - Vision loss that impedes a persons ability to carry out everyday activities, but still allows for some functionally useful sight. It cannot be corrected by glasses, contact lenses, or surgery.
- Causes<sup>1</sup>:
  - Macular degeneration
  - Cataracts
  - Glaucoma
  - Diabetic retinopathy

## Low vision simulation video<sup>2</sup>

- <http://www.visionaware.org/section.aspx?FolderID=6&SectionID=116&DocumentID=3393>

## Support Services for Low Vision

- Goals of support services
  - Help patients to maximize the use of their remaining vision
  - Teach how to use assistive devices
  - Maintain independence

## Support Services for Low Vision

- Columbia Lighthouse for the blind & visually impaired<sup>3</sup>
  - Rehabilitation services
  - Case management
  - Circle of friends support group
  - Independent living skills specialists
  - Low vision specialists

## Low Vision Specialists

- Low vision evaluation includes<sup>4</sup>:
  - History
  - Limitations
  - Goals
  - Evaluation of visual deficits
  - Discuss adaptive aids

## Adaptive Devices

- High powered glasses
- Magnifiers/Telescopic devices
- Special lighting/glare filters
- Absorptive glasses
- Screen magnification systems<sup>5</sup>
- Daily living aids<sup>6</sup>
- Adaptive kitchen aids

## When to Refer

- Recognize warning signs
- Ask your patients if they have difficulty with<sup>7</sup>:
  - Recognizing the faces of family and friends?
  - Reading, cooking, sewing, or fixing things around the house?
  - Selecting and matching the color of your clothes?
  - Seeing clearly with the lights on or feeling like they are dimmer than normal?
  - Reading traffic signs or the names of stores?

## Local Support

- National eye institute resources<sup>8</sup>
  - <http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/content/resources2.asp>
- Columbia Lighthouse for the blind and visually impaired<sup>4</sup>
  - Silver Spring, Maryland – low vision center:  
8720 Georgia Avenue  
Suite 210  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 589-0894
  - Washington, DC – low vision center:  
1825 K Street, NW  
Suite 1103  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-454-6400

## Effective Advocacy

- Educate about low vision and services available
- Provide resource information
- Encourage your patient to schedule an appointment with their eye care professional or vision specialist
- Establish a relationship with vision specialists
- Get family and friends involved

## Consumer Educational Materials

- Materials available for your patient<sup>9,10</sup>
  - <http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/programs/visionandaging/module3.asp>
  - <http://www.visionaware.org/section.aspx?FolderID=8&DocumentID=3338>
- Educational Materials for your waiting room
  - The aging eye handout
  - Make vision a priority handout

## References

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- 4. Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind. Programs and services; low vision services. Available at: <http://www.clb.org/low-vision-service>. Accessed April 20, 2013.
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- 7. National Institute of Health. Information for healthy vision. Available at: <http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/content/know.asp>. Accessed April 20, 2013.
- 8. National Institute of Health. Information for healthy vision; resources. Available at: <http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/content/resources2.asp>. Accessed April 20, 2013.
- 9. National Institute of Health. NEHEP programs; vision and aging. Available at: <http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/programs/visionandaging/module3.asp>. Accessed April 20, 2013.
- 10. American Foundation for the Blind. Vision aware videos. Available at: <http://www.visionaware.org/section.aspx?FolderID=8&DocumentID=3338>. Accessed April 20, 2013.

Questions??