

# TIPS For Living Life To Its Fullest

## Living With Low Vision

A **VARIETY OF EYE CONDITIONS**, including macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy, can make it difficult to complete daily tasks. The following are some of the ways in which occupational therapy practitioners help people with low vision to function at the highest possible level.

- **Prevent Accidents and Injury:** Recommending lighting that will be most effective for a particular area and activity, pointing out potential hazards and offering solutions, and showing ways to do something in a different way enhances safety.
- **Teach New Skills:** Techniques such as eccentric viewing, visual tracking, and visual scanning can help people learn to use their remaining vision more efficiently and effectively.
- **Modify the Task or Environment:** Individualized changes can improve function, such as recommending adapted equipment tailored to the person's needs, and providing training in low-vision tools such as magnifiers.
- **Promote a Healthy and Satisfying Lifestyle:** A holistic approach helps ensure that clients are able to participate in the things they want and need to do, from basic activities of daily living to recreational and leisure activities.

The following tips were shared by occupational therapy practitioners who work with clients with low vision.

If you want to:	Consider these activity tips:
Function in your home easily and safely.	Remove clutter, cords, and throw rugs to avoid falls. Place furniture and appliances in traffic patterns that feel comfortable to you. Be sure the color of grab bars or other equipment contrasts with the wall. Maintain good lighting in walkways, hallways, stairwells, etc. Use labeled tray dividers to hold items like cosmetics and small tools. Hang clothes by color in closets (put similar colors, like black and navy, on opposite sides), and use different hampers for similar colors to keep them sorted. Organize each room by keeping commonly used items in the same easy-to-access location.

If you want to:	Consider these activity tips:
Shop for groceries and other items.	<p>Make a list of what you need according to where the items are found in the aisles.</p> <p>Shop online or use stores that offer delivery services.</p> <p>Advocate for yourself and ask for assistance at the Courtesy Desk if necessary.</p>
Manage your medications.	<p>Ask your physician to clearly describe and explain new medications, and ask your pharmacist for large-print labels.</p> <p>Mark each pill bottle in a distinctive way to make them easier to identify (e.g., attach Velcro, felt, rubber bands, a button, etc.).</p> <p>Use large-print pill boxes or a talking medication reminder.</p>
Improve visibility.	<p>Use contrast to distinguish items, such as a dark bathmat with rubber backing on a light floor, a light cutting board on a dark countertop, colored tape on the edge of stair risers, and white sheets with a dark comforter and pillows.</p> <p>Use night lights, a flashlight, or hall or room lighting if you get up in the night.</p> <p>Avoid moving quickly from a dark room to a lighted area, and vice versa; allow your eyes time to adjust to changing light levels.</p> <p>Use an e-reader so you can adjust the font size, lighting level, and contrast.</p> <p>Use overhead lighting to help eliminate shadows and keep rooms evenly lit.</p> <p>Use shades on all light sources to reduce glare.</p> <p>Sit with your back towards a window or lamp. Use a gooseneck lamp for tabletop activities.</p>

If you want to:	Consider these activity tips:
Prepare meals and snacks independently.	<p>Keep items in the refrigerator and cabinets in an order that seems natural for you ( i.e., organized by type of food or item), and try to store them only one row deep.</p> <p>Scan or copy recipes into a high-contrast, large-print format. Organize these alphabetically by type so you can easily find them.</p> <p>Use a wall-mounted pegboard to hang frequently used kitchen tools.</p> <p>Use items with good contrast, such as a white mug for coffee or black measuring cups for flour and sugar; use under-counter lighting to highlight meal prep areas; use timers with oversized dials and buttons, etc.</p> <p>Mark appliance dials with bump dots to make the settings easier to identify.</p> <p>Use the microwave if you feel unsafe using the stove.</p>
Manage your finances.	<p>Organize bills and other important papers in different colored trays or folders with large labels.</p> <p>Pay bills and track accounts online so you can enlarge the font.</p> <p>Use adaptive equipment (e.g., large-print checks, signature guides, magnifiers, etc.).</p>

### Need More Information?

Occupational therapy practitioners can help implement any of the tips above, and they can also provide skilled services specific to your individual needs. If you are interested in receiving occupational therapy services to enhance your independence and functional ability, ask your physician, optometrist, or ophthalmologist for a recommendation. Occupational therapy practitioners are available through many hospitals, medical centers, clinics, and private practices.

Most private health insurance programs cover occupational therapy services for disabilities, including low vision.

Medicaid covers occupational therapy services on a state-by-state basis. Medicare extended coverage of low vision rehabilitation services provided by occupational therapists to all beneficiaries in 2002. Referral by an optometrist or physician is required for Medicare coverage.

You can find additional information through the American Occupational Therapy Association at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org).

Occupational therapy is a skilled health, rehabilitation, and educational service that helps people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations).

Copyright © 2013 by the American Occupational Therapy Association. This material may be copied and distributed for personal or educational uses without written consent. For all other uses, contact [copyright@aota.org](mailto:copyright@aota.org).