

Maintaining Quality of Life With Low Vision

Low vision can cause difficulty in seeing detailed letters and numbers when reading, recognizing the slope of a curb, steps, or facial features, and distinguishing between similar colors, such as black and blue. Adults who have these problems may have trouble maintaining their independence and completing typical day-to-day activities.

It is possible for people with vision impairments to continue to live independent and meaningful lives with the help of an occupational therapist. Practitioners can help people with low vision to continue living in their own homes and complete daily tasks, such as showering, dressing, cooking, grocery shopping, managing finances, and getting around in the community.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Evaluate** a person's environment at work and at home to determine how it can be altered to make the most out of a person's remaining vision.
- **Help** a person identify items used every day that need to "stand out" (provide a contrast) by marking them with bright colors so they can be easily found.
- **Increase** lighting so objects can be seen easily. In addition to providing extra light to items, occupational therapists also can identify areas that could be dangerous if not well lit, such as stairwells, kitchens, and spaces with area rugs.
- **Reduce** clutter in rooms to increase safety by removing items from countertops, tabletops, and floors.
- **Educate** a person on how to compensate for vision loss by using other senses, such as touch, hearing, and smell.
- **Recommend** and train a person to use assistive devices that can aid in completing daily activities,

such as magnifiers, audio equipment, and voice-activated computers.

- **Evaluate** a person's ability to drive and determine whether a person with low vision can adjust his or her driving so that he or she can continue to get around safely or should develop alternative ways to get around.

What can friends and family of a person with low vision do?

- **Stay** educated about the person's vision ability.
- **Help** and support a person with low vision in adapting his or her home to keep it safe and functional.
- **Help** a person with low vision access community resources, including talking books, audio reader services, and centers for the blind.
- **Consult** your physician about obtaining a referral to occupational therapy.

Need more information?

A vision impairment is a serious issue that may affect many aspects of a person's life, including work and leisure activities. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and clinics, including low vision centers. Contact your doctor or other local health officials for more information.

with a broad range of physical, developmental, and behavioral conditions in addition to low vision, such as low back pain, mood disorders, and substance use disorders. Occupational therapy practitioners also advise people in home modification and preventing falls, and help clients in wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children

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