



TRUSTED TIPS
By HomeWell Care Services™

HomeWellcares
COMMUNITY EDUCATION INITIATIVE



Navigating Life at Home with Low Vision

For millions of seniors, low vision not only impairs their sight but their quality of life. This condition, which is prevalent among older adults, is characterized by a degree of vision loss in which an individual can still perceive figures, shapes and letters but not with the clarity they should have, and it cannot be corrected with conventional eyeglasses or surgery; individuals must simply learn to adjust to it.¹

Because low vision is a condition that gradually worsens, it is common for older adults to be unaware of how compromised their vision has become. Initial signs can be subtle, but as it progresses, more severe symptoms may emerge, jeopardizing not only their safety but also that of others. These incidents are sometimes mistakenly attributed to forgetfulness or even dementia when, in fact, they could be underlying signs of low vision.

What You Need to Know About Low Vision

If you suspect your loved one may be suffering from low vision, here are some important facts and signs you should be mindful of:

- 1 Warning Signs:** Your loved one may have low vision if they struggle to distinguish colors, read, drive safely, and view a television or computer screen clearly. Look for signs such as them wearing mismatched or stained clothes, constantly spilling drinks or food, not recognizing people, or frequently calling the wrong phone number.
- 2 Related Conditions:** Low vision can be a symptom of diabetes and neurologic conditions such as stroke, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease. If your loved one has a history of any of these conditions, they are at a higher risk of suffering from low vision.²
- 3 Weakened Hearing or Other Senses:** Adapting to vision impairment when paired with other weakened senses like hearing, smell or taste can be particularly difficult for seniors. This can also make activities of daily living even more difficult.
- 4 Varying Degrees of Low Vision:** Vision loss can manifest in different ways, which means one could be capable of performing one task while struggling with another. For example, a person with macular degeneration, which impacts central vision, may not recognize a family member but can easily pick up a safety pin off the floor.

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Steps for Safely Aging in Place

Low vision does not have to equate to low ability. If your loved one is exhibiting symptoms of low vision, here are some steps you and your family can take to help preserve their quality of life and safeguard their well-being over the long term:



Get a Diagnosis

The first step towards helping them is to seek a professional diagnosis. The only way to ensure whether your loved one has low vision is to visit an eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam.



Offer Emotional Support

Doctors compare the initial reaction to vision loss to the five stages of grief experienced after losing a loved one.³ Your loved one may react strongly to the news of their diagnosis, but when you view their response as them processing their grief, you're better equipped to understand them and communicate with each other.



Discuss Health Support Options

From support groups and mental health professionals specializing in vision loss to occupational therapists, there is an entire community dedicated to maintaining a healthy quality of life after a low vision diagnosis. Discuss these options with your loved one and assure them they are not alone.



Plan for the Future

Simple adjustments can be made to ensure their safety during everyday life, such as removing clutter and any fall hazards in the home, ensuring adequate lighting, and providing protective eyewear for activities like gardening or chores around the house. For older adults with moderate to severe vision loss, finding support at home for activities of daily living is essential to keeping their independence, as living alone can be too dangerous without another person to provide daily support.

Help at Home

As you plan and discuss options with your family, consider the best course of action in the long term. Even if your loved one can safely function on their own, you will still eventually want help at home to monitor them as their visual impairment progresses.

For those struggling to maintain their independence due to low vision, HomeWell Care Services offers something unique—a specialized care approach designed by industry experts to help them navigate their homes, complete everyday tasks and enjoy a higher quality of life. Our Low Vision specialized care offering is led by our expert Care Managers and administered by trained caregivers to provide seniors like your loved one with the support they need to experience a happier, healthier life at home.

Sources:

1: <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/low-vision>

2: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/8585-low-vision> 3: <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/11/8/110>

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