

## Low Vision Aids

Even when a patient has been advised that it may not be possible to improve their vision through medical treatment, they can still ensure that they make the best use of their sight by wearing the correct spectacle prescription, having adequate and appropriate lighting and possibly using magnifiers or other low vision aids. This leaflet will try and explain and discuss the benefits of additional lighting and magnifiers.



### How can lighting help?

As we grow older the amount of light reaching the retina diminishes and therefore we often need improved lighting to help us to see things more clearly. This is especially true if we have other eye conditions such as cataracts and A.R.M.D. (age related macular degeneration).

Even if our eyes are completely healthy, due to the natural ageing process, at age 60 we will require 4 times as much light compared to a 20 yr old to achieve a comparable level of vision, whilst at age 40 we would still need twice the amount of light of a 20 year old.

Sometimes a room can appear deceptively bright, but if the lighting within the room is not evenly distributed it may not be adequate for detailed vision, especially for reading. Ideally we should have additional task lighting as well as the general lighting in the room. This can be achieved by the use of a flexible lamp, placed in front or to the side of you that can be adjusted to shine directly at what you need to see.

### Adjustable lamps vs. Standard lamps

Flexible and adjustable lamps are useful as they can be either desk or floor mounted, and can be directed specifically to where they are needed and ideally below eye level, preventing glare. They also have a reflective lining in the shade so that more light is reflected to where it is needed. Fluorescent lamps are particularly efficient as they produce a lot of light, but use less energy and give off less heat.

Normal table lamps and standard lamps can provide adequate lighting but are not ideal for close tasks, as they are often not easily adjustable and the light usually not bright enough.

Additionally normal table lamps can get very hot, so you may be at risk from burning yourself.

### How do magnifiers help?

Magnifiers help by making the object you're looking at large enough to see. They can help in everyday tasks like: -

- Reading bills, letters
- Looking at photos
- Reading cooking instructions
- Helping to see maps, newspapers, directories etc. or whilst doing hobby work

There are different strengths and styles of magnifiers available, which can be used for different tasks.



## What types of Magnifiers are available?

There are three main types available for close work. These are Hand magnifiers, stand magnifiers and electronic magnifiers. All types are available with fitted illumination to improve contrast and are then known as illuminated magnifiers.

As the name suggests, hand magnifiers need to be held in the hand and are therefore ideal for tasks that only require them to be used for short periods of time, like reading ingredients on a label or recipes. They can be difficult to use over longer periods if you have a poor grip or shaky hands. Hand magnifiers are usually used in conjunction with your distance correction.



Stand magnifiers need to be rested on the page and are designed to have a fixed focal length and are therefore easier to use for prolonged reading activities and are less affected by a poor grip or unsteady hands. Stand magnifiers are usually used in conjunction with your reading correction.

Electronic magnifiers can either be stand-alone or have their own viewing screens. They work by having a camera built into them, which is then displayed using a television screen or computer or displayed on a built in monitor. Although they can be more expensive, the levels of magnification and extra contrast that can be achieved, makes them an ideal alternative.

## Helpful Hints and Tips

- As there are many magnifiers available in differing strengths, types and styles, you may find it necessary to have a range of magnifiers for different tasks.
- Using a clipboard or table to rest your newspaper on, may help to steady your hand and keep the page flat.
- Taking regular breaks will help to relieve eyestrain or if your eyes are getting tired.
- Using a black marker on white paper when writing letters or notes will improve the contrast and make it easier to see them.
- Keep your spectacles and magnifiers clean.

**For advice or more leaflets, please call**

**0800 85 44 77**

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