

## Useful Home Adaptations for The Blind & Visually Impaired

Decreased visual acuity does not have to lead to the loss of independence. Often simple changes in the home combined with the use of low vision aids and proper organization can allow the person with visual impairment to live as they had been used to living. The following information is presented to serve as a helpful guide and does not address all tasks or difficult situations. If your vision prevents you from performing a certain task, do not assume that it cannot be done. All of the home adaptations should be used in conjunction with the use of low vision glasses, low vision aids and training in the use of the low vision aids.

**There are four factors that should be considered when a decrease in vision poses a problem:**

1. Increase task illumination. Use lamps, illuminated magnifiers and flashlights.

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An elderly person requires nearly three times as much light as a 20-year-old. A person who is visually impaired may need even more lighting.

2. Decrease glare from lighting, windows and sun as glare can further reduce vision and cause fatigue.
3. Modify the size of the object with either large print versions of the product or with special low vision magnification products and glasses. An eye doctor who specializes in low vision rehabilitation will be able to prescribe the needed glasses or magnifiers that are necessary to perform a certain task. Eye glasses and magnifiers can be made up to 20X power. Electronic low vision aids can provide up to 60X power.
4. Enhance contrast between the object and its surroundings.

### In the Kitchen:

1. Attach lights to the underside of cabinets to increase task light in work area. Incandescent light provides better contrast between objects, fluorescent light does not cast shadows. Do not create glare.
2. Gooseneck lamps can be used to see food that is being prepared or cooked. To avoid glare place lamp below eye level.
3. Use special aids for the kitchen:
  - Large Print Kitchen timer
  - Cutting board with a black side and a white side to enhance contrast while cutting.

- Use a knife with adjustable slicing guide to make easy and safe cuts.
  - Use special measuring cups that enhance contrast or have large print Makings.
  - Use an audible liquid level guide when pouring liquids.
4. Label grocery products as soon as they are brought home from the grocery store. Products can be labeled with large white address labels using a heavy black marker. Braille labels can be made or a personal code can be created using various numbers of rubber bands around the products.
  5. Organize shelves systematically and place products in alphabetical order.
  6. Organize kitchen drawers.
  7. Put pots, ice cube trays or containers that contain liquids on a rimmed cookie sheet to avoid spills when moving these pots or containers.
  8. To judge liquid levels, use pots or containers with a white interior to see dark colored liquids or pots and containers with a dark interior to see light colored liquids.
  9. Have a storage system for location of food in the pantry or refrigerator.
  10. To identify the markings of the microwave, stove, refrigerator or thermostat:
    - Mark the dials with raised orange or clear stick-on dots.
    - Use additional lighting in the form of a lamp or flashlight.
    - Use a lighted hand magnifier or a stick-

- or a stick-on magnifier over the dials.
- Learn to listen or feel for the “clicks” of the various settings.
11. Use an audible meat thermometer or use a thermometer with raised marks to test if the meat is done. Time your cooking with a large print timer.
  12. To avoid getting burned, get into the habit of shutting the burner off before removing food. Hold hand well above the burner to check if the burner is warm. Know the position of the stove knobs.
  13. Do not wear loose clothes with long sleeves that could catch on fire.
  14. Turn pan handles inward from the stove or counter edge.
  15. Use Corelle or plastic dishes if you are concerned about broken glass.
  16. Set a timer or turn on a light as a reminder that the stove or oven is on.
  17. Use oven mitts that cover the arm up to the elbow when removing food from the oven.

### **Future Issues: The rest of the house!**

#### **Miscellaneous News:**

- ◆The Arizona Chapter of the Foundation Fighting Blindness will be having its inaugural 5K Vision walk to raise funds for retinal degenerative disease research. It will take place on Saturday, March 10 at Arizona Horse Lover's Park in Phoenix. For more information, go to [www.visionwalk.org](http://www.visionwalk.org) and click on the Phoenix, Arizona location or call Jacque Olsen at 480-894-0712.

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