
Vision loss - adapting everyday activities

A person with vision loss may find everyday activities difficult. In many cases, activities can be successfully adapted and the person can continue to live safely and independently in their home.

A few examples of activities that can be adapted are listed below. These suggestions apply to a range of other activities as well.

Banking, money and paying bills

Suggestions include:

- Use a black felt-tipped pen and a template to fill in forms. Templates may be available from your bank or you could ask that they be made up for you.
- Fill in the forms at home, using a magnifier and focal lighting.
- Familiarise yourself with one type of automatic teller machine (ATM). A keyboard style ATM is easier to use than a touch screen. An occupational therapist can assist you with training in how to use an ATM.
- Using electronic banking (EFTPOS) with a pin number may be easier than filling out deposit and withdrawal slips or handling cash.
- Most bills can now be paid via telephone.
- Many bills are available in large print. Contact your service provider to check this.
- Learn to distinguish between different coins by checking for size, weight and edge milling. You can tell the different notes apart by checking for length (longer notes signify increase in monetary value). A note guide may be useful.
- Change smaller coins into larger coins or notes at the bank.
- Separate gold and silver coins in your wallet. Fold specific notes, or store notes in different compartments, to make it easier to locate the exact amount that you need. Organising your wallet before you leave home may make money handling easier when shopping.

Dusting and vacuuming

Suggestions include:

- Spray cleansers directly onto the cloth. Wrap the cloth around the nozzle to avoid inadvertently spraying the cleanser near your face or anywhere else.
- Move furniture and table-top items before beginning to dust or vacuum. Use a systematic approach, moving from one end to the other. Break areas down into smaller parts.
- Use tactile markings applied to the vacuum cleaner to help you easily locate appropriate settings.

Making the beds

Suggestions include:

- Attach safety pins to one corner of a fitted sheet to help with orientation.
- To place a cover on a doona, start with the doona cover inside out. Then place your hands inside the cover, grasp the corners of the doona and shake, letting the cover drop over the doona.

Washing the dishes

Suggestions include:

- Wash one item at a time, rather than filling the sink with every item.
- Run fingertips over plates and dishes to check for cleanliness.
- Dish racks may help you to organise the dishes on the sink.
- Use tactile markings applied to a dishwasher to enable you to use the machine independently.

Cooking and kitchen chores

Suggestions include:

- Apply tactile markings to various appliances to help you accurately use the controls and dials.
- Look for recipes in audio, Braille or large print formats.
- Convert measurements (ml and gm) to cups and spoons, choosing differently coloured measuring equipment to increase contrast. Talking scales may help.
- Place non-slip matting, in a contrasting colour, under a chopping board to keep items more stable.
- Try using contrasting coloured chopping boards and focal lighting to help you see more detail and cut food safely and accurately.
- Make sure both the bench space and sink are clear when preparing food and cooking. This will make it easier to trail across the bench or sink area to locate items and separate food scraps from food to be cooked.
- Consider heavy, wide-based saucepans and frypans with high sides. These will remain more stable on a stovetop and keep ingredients contained when stirring to avoid spillage.
- Consider using trays or containers to store similar types of food. Keeping items organised and stored in consistent locations may help make food preparation and cooking tasks easier to complete.
- Try pre-prepared sauces to help simplify cooking.

Doing the laundry

Suggestions include:

- Have separate baskets for light and dark clothing.
- Pin sock pairs together before you put them through the wash.
- Apply tactile or contrasting coloured markings to laundry appliances to make it easier to operate them.
- Try indoor clothes stands for hanging clothes – they may be easier to manage than an outside washing line.
- Use coat hangers for drying t-shirts and shirts to minimise ironing.

Managing personal hygiene

Suggestions include:

- Mark your toothbrush with a tactile or contrasting coloured tag so you can distinguish it from others.
- When applying paste to the toothbrush, place your index finger on the brush to guide the placement of the paste or apply the paste onto your fingertip first and then wipe this onto the brush.
- Consider using personal hygiene products in pump packs that squeeze out pre-measured amounts.
- Shampoo and conditioner in differently coloured or shaped bottles may assist with identification. Rubber bands or other tactile markings may also be useful for identification.

Writing letters

Suggestions include:

- Use black felt-tipped pens. Black on white provides the greatest contrast. Other colour combinations with high contrast may also be useful.
- Apply large print contrast stickers or tactile marks to a keyboard to make typing easier.
- Use a document holder with a line-marker when typing from another document.
- Install adapted software on your computer to help with writing tasks.
- Contact organisations such as Vision Australia to find out about consultancy and training in using adaptive technology for writing tasks.

Vision loss services

Vision loss services provide support and advice to people of all ages and with all degrees of vision impairment or blindness. Assessment of optical and other devices is available as well as support in developing strategies to help you make best use of your remaining vision. Occupational therapists offer advice and guidance on increasing your independence in a wide variety of everyday activities. You may also need support in making changes to your home and workplace or training in the use of adaptive equipment or a guide dog.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your eye specialist
- Occupational therapist
- Vision loss organisations
- Vision Australia , and Low Vision Services Tel. 1300 84 74 66
- Guide Dogs Victoria Tel. (03) 9854 4444 or 1800 804 805
- Seeing Eye Dogs Australia (03) 9381 6400

Things to remember

- Most everyday activities can be adapted to suit a person with vision impairment.
- Adaptations include the use of lighting and contrast, other senses, organisational strategies, adaptive equipment and technology.
- Vision loss organisations can offer information and advice.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Vision Australia

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