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## Vision loss - social events

Many people aged 70 or over will experience significant vision loss as a natural consequence of ageing. For someone who has been sighted all their life, this gradual loss of vision might prevent them from enjoying their usual social activities. Over time, a person can become isolated, bored and lonely. With planning and preparation, most social events, such as holidays or outings, can be adapted to suit people who are blind or have low vision.

### Sighted people can help

Sighted people can help people who are blind or have low vision to enjoy their social events in many different ways, including:

- Offer your arm when walking in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Tell people of upcoming obstacles, such as stairs.
- Read information to them.
- Describe what you see around you.
- Help them locate objects so they can touch them.
- Partner them while dancing, since two people who are blind or have low vision may become disoriented.

### Eating out

In a restaurant, a sighted person can help a person who is blind or has low vision in many ways, including:

- Read the menu to them.
- Describe the location of food on their plate using the 'clock face' system, such as meat at 6 o'clock, potatoes at 9 o'clock.
- Ask them if they want condiments and place the salt and pepper within easy reach.
- Tell or show them the location of their drink on the table.
- Offer assistance to find the toilets.

### Outings and day trips

Planning and preparation are essential. Suggestions include:

- Make sure there is a sufficient ratio of sighted people.
- Call the venue beforehand to check details such as access and whether people who are blind or have low vision will be allowed to touch the displays.
- Travel to the venue as a group.
- Some tourist attractions have audio tour commentaries.

### Holidays

There are holiday plans available to people who are blind or have low vision, featuring trained staff and volunteers. Suggestions on organising a holiday include:

- Make sure there is a sufficient ratio of sighted people.
- Arrange suitable accommodation, such as ground floor rooms to offer easy access.

- For bus trips or other long hauls, make sure audio commentary is offered to stave off boredom.
- Keep a list of emergency contact numbers.

## Theatre

Audio description is available at some theatres. People who are blind or have low vision use an earpiece and receiver to listen to live verbal descriptions of what is happening on stage.

## University of the Third Age

The University of the Third Age is an academic program designed specifically for older people. The classes aren't structured like traditional schooling and students can learn what they like at their own pace. Subjects are devised and run by tutors and students alike. The needs of the group are taken into account when drawing up course content, requirements and length.

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your vision specialist
- Vision loss organisations
- Vision Australia , and Low Vision Services Tel. 1300 84 74 66

## Things to remember

- A person who loses their sight may avoid socialising and eventually become isolated and lonely.
- Most social events, such as holidays or outings, can be adapted to suit people who are blind or have low vision.
- Generally, sighted people are needed to offer assistance.

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

Vision Australia

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