

Helpful Hints for Families of the Visually Impaired

—*Donna Wicker, O.D., Low Vision Services*

- 1.** Identify yourself when you enter the room. Tell the person with visual impairment who else is accompanying you.
- 2.** Keep the environment organized and free of obstacles. Do not rearrange a person with visual impairment's belongings without describing their new location.
- 3.** Ask the person what type of lighting allows for optimum use of vision. Use good contrast to assist the person in daily activities (i.e. pour dark coffee into a white cup, write very large with a bold black marker).
- 4.** When eating, describe the location of food items and utensils using a clock format. (i.e. "you have potato at 4:00, peas at 7:00 and meat at 12:00").
- 5.** Use raised markers, high contrast tape, nail polish or "puffy" fabric paint to mark dials on appliances, thermostat, salt and pepper shakers, etc.
- 6.** Mobility: Have the person with visual impairment lightly hold your bent elbow. Walk smoothly, and both verbally and physically indicate steps or obstacles. Be sure to inquire as to which side is more comfortable for the person.
- 7.** Be creative! Rely on input from the person with visual impairment to assist him or her in being as independent as possible!

Commonly Asked Questions About Eye Care

- Q.** Can I make my eyes worse by using reading or straining them?
- A.** No, patients are advised to use their eyes as much as they wish. Eye conditions cannot be made worse by use of the eyes. Resting the eyes intermittently may make one feel more comfortable, but will not improve eyesight, or prevent eyesight from becoming worse from other causes.
- Q.** How will light affect my eyes?
- A.** Good lighting for close work and reading makes good sense. This may reduce eye discomfort and increase reading efficiency. However, reading in dim light is in no way harmful to the eyes.
- Q.** Can I prevent my vision from decreasing?
- A.** If you have an eye disorder which can be helped by treatment, the best suggestion is to obtain a thorough eye examination. Your eye care practitioner can advise you as to whether your visual disability can be helped through medical means.
- Q.** What are common changes due to aging?
- A.**
- . Dry eyes due to a reduction in tear flow as we get older;
 - . Floating spots when looking around;
 - . Blurred vision which can be caused by cataracts or retinal problems.

These changes should be checked by your eye doctor when they occur.