

# Lighting

**Support throughout central vision loss**

Good lighting in your home can help you make the best use of your vision. This leaflet is also available on audio CD and online.

**No one need face macular degeneration alone.  
For information and support call 0300 3030 111.**

Good lighting at home is important, particularly if you have poor vision. Light becomes more important as we age. A 65 year old person needs at least twice as much light as they needed at 21. Many people who think they need low vision aids actually just need better lighting.

At home we use general lighting and task lighting.

## General lighting

General lighting needs to be bright and even and not cause glare. Try to make the lighting similar in all rooms so that you don't have to

adjust to new light levels as you move about the home. Well-lit halls and stairs are important safety considerations. Leaving hall lights on can help with safe movement around the home at night.

## Tips for effective lighting

- Have several lights in a room rather than one bright light and position them to get an even spread of light with no dark corners.
- Shade bulbs so that they do not shine into your eyes. Check the maximum bulb rating for light shades to

make sure you use the correct bulbs.

- Round paper shades are good at diffusing light in the room.



- Use uplighters to bounce light onto the ceiling and back into the room.

**Clockwise from above:  
Round paper shade,  
wall-mounted uplighter,  
floor-standing uplighter.**



- Spotlights are effective for lighting specific areas in a well-lit room but can cause confusing bright and dark patches and glare if used in isolation.
- Dimmer systems can be used to change the amount of light to give more light in the evening for example or to have less light when a room is being used for relaxing in and more light when tasks are being done.

### Light bulbs and shades

Traditional tungsten light bulbs have been

phased out because they get hot and use a lot of energy. New low energy bulbs get bright quickly and are available in a range of brightness levels, shapes and fittings. Good light shades are important to prevent harsh light and confusing shadows.

### Types of light bulbs

- Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) offer instant crisp, bright light. They tend to be more expensive than other products but can save money as they are long life and energy efficient. Hand-held versions are also

available for taking out and about.

- Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) are fluorescent tubes curved or folded into various shapes and compact enough to suit a range of light fittings. They are energy efficient and long life bulbs. They may take time to reach full brightness but there are 'quick start' products that warm up faster. Unfortunately most CFLs can't be used with standard dimmer switches.
- Fluorescent tubes produce less heat and use less energy.

A single long straight type of this bulb is often used in the kitchen. Replacing these with multiple lights will provide more even light.

- Halogen lighting produces a very bright, white light but gets extremely hot. Avoid the narrow beam spotlights. Be careful when changing halogen bulbs; use a cloth – the natural oil on skin will damage the bulb. Halogen lighting is cheap and provides instant brightness but isn't as energy efficient as CFLs or LEDs.

## Light bulb ratings

**An old 60W bulb is roughly equivalent to a:**

**15W CFL (compact fluorescent tube);**

**an 8W LED (light emitting diode);**

**and around 800 Lumens (lumen is an indicator of brightness).**

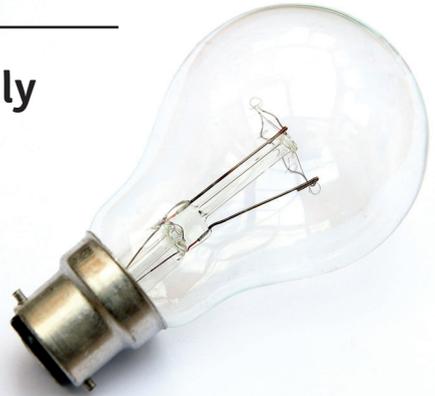
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**An old 100W bulb is roughly equivalent to a:**

**27W CFL;**

**an 18W LED**

**and around 1550 Lumens**



## Colour temperature

Choosing the correct bulb colour ‘temperature’ is really important. Warm, neutral, light is best.

Colour temperature is measured in Kelvin (K). The higher the K value, the cooler the appearance of the light. The range 3500K–4000K is neutral.

## Task lighting

Extra lighting is needed for activities like reading, preparing food or other close work.

Effective task lighting can really help. It can:

- be helpful in the kitchen. Under-cupboard lighting can be very effective for lighting work surfaces
- make reading easier by improving



**Under-cupboard kitchen lighting**

contrast of text on the page

- make it easier to identify colours
- help to break through mistiness in vision
- reduce the amount of magnification needed.

Task lamps need to be positioned below eye level, shining onto the task, not into your eyes.

They should be stable to avoid getting knocked over and bulbs should stay cool to avoid discomfort or even burning yourself.

**When buying a task lamp consider:**

- What activities do you want it for?
- Would a table top, floor-standing or wall-mounted one be best?
- How easy is it to adjust its position to get the light where you need it?
- Does the shade stop the light shining directly into your eyes when the lamp is positioned below eye level?

The amount of light needed varies from person to person. To find the right level for you, start with the task light really close to the

object you need to see and then move it away slowly until you find the maximum distance comfortable for you. Halving the distance between an object and the light will increase the amount of light on the object fourfold.

If you are using a magnifier with a task lamp, keep the magnifier parallel to the light so that you look through it onto a well-lit object.

Don't put the magnifier under the light because this causes annoying reflections and pools of light on the object.

Keep some background light on when using task lighting to reduce glare and fatigue.

### **More tips for lighting and contrast**

- Open curtains wide and keep windows clean.
- Remove net curtains.
- Use horizontal blinds such as roller blinds to control the amount of light coming in and to prevent it shining in your eyes.
- Blue blocker filter lenses in glasses can

improve contrast and reduce glare. Having the correct colour temperature bulbs can cut out the need for blue blockers at home.

- Use colour and contrast for objects such as light switches and door handles.
- Paint walls and doors different colours.
- Paint walls in matt pale colours to reflect light into a room.

## Further information

For a list of equipment and suppliers please call our helpline:  
**0300 3030 111**

‘Choosing energy saving light bulbs for your home’, by Ricability and Thomas Pocklington Trust.

[www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk)

020 8995 0880

The RNIB has a leaflet ‘Improve the lighting in your home’ and other helpful products.

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
0303 123 9999

## How we help

We are the national charity for anyone affected by central vision loss. We provide free information and support to improve

lives today. We fund research so that one day we can overcome macular disease.

All our services are free to those with macular conditions, their family and friends.

**Make our helpline your first point of contact for your questions about macular disease.**

**0300 3030 111**

**Monday to Friday  
9am – 5pm**

**help@  
macularsociety.org**

**www.macularsociety.  
org**

As well as the helpline, our services include:

**Counselling** – confidential telephone support from a professional counsellor.

**Support groups** – we have over 300 local groups around the UK.

**Telephone befrienders** – particularly helpful for those who find it hard to get out and about.

**Gadget Guides** – tips on using gadgets and technology to help people adapt to living with sight loss.

**Skills for Seeing** – training to help people make best use of remaining sight.

## **Six months free membership**

If you would like to receive regular updates about living with macular conditions, treatments and medical research to find a cure then membership is for you.

Join for free today by calling 01264 350 551 or go to [www.macularsociety.org/6months](http://www.macularsociety.org/6months)



**Macular Society**

**Support throughout central vision loss**

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