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.

You don’t have to face macular disease alone. For the best information and support call us on 0300 3030 111.
Good lighting at home is important, particularly if you have poor vision. Light becomes more important as we age. By the age of 60 we need 3x more light than in our 20s. If you add a sight loss condition to this the figure can double. Therefore a 60 year old with sight loss will need approximately 6x more light than a sighted 20 year old.

There are 3 types of lighting: Natural daylight, general lighting and task lighting.

**Natural daylight**

It is important to make the most of natural daylight, but it can sometimes cause glare so may need to be controlled.

- 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. For more information please refer to our ‘Protecting your eyes’ leaflet.
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. Avoid using lampshades or spotlights where you can see the bulb.
• Use uplighters to bounce light onto the ceiling and back into the room.

• 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 vary the amount of light needed.

Light bulbs

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.

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.
The brightness of the bulb is measured in Lumens. The higher the Lumen the brighter the light.

**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 Kelvin the cooler (white) the appearance of the light.

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**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).

An old 100W bulb is roughly equivalent to a:

- 27W CFL
- an 18W LED
- and around 1550 Lumens
The lower the Kelvin the warmer (yellow) the light will be. The range 3500K–4000K is neutral.

**Task lighting**

Extra lighting is needed for activities like reading, preparing food.

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Under-cupboard kitchen lighting
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 the 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 create 4 times more light on the object.

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.

Use colour and contrast for light switches to make them stand out.

Paint walls in matt pale colours to reflect light into a room.
Beating Macular Disease

Macular disease is the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK, with around 300 people diagnosed every day.

The Macular Society is the only charity determined to beat the fear and isolation of macular disease with world class research, and the best advice and support.

Our research programme is focused on finding new treatments and a cure.
to Beat Macular Disease forever. To support people affected by macular disease now, the Macular Society provides a range of support, information and services:

The Advice and Information Service (0300 3030 111) is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Alternatively, you can email help@macularsociety.org

Our website provides a wide range of information and resources for people affected by macular disease. You can also find out more about the services we offer.

Visit it at macularsociety.org

Our network of over 400 Macular Society Support Groups stretches across the UK. Each one offers practical and emotional support for people with macular disease, from those living with it today.

Find your local group at macularsociety.org/groups

We provide a free, confidential Counselling Service over the phone. Call the Advice and Information Service for more information.
Working with you to Beat Macular Disease:

• We provide the best advice and information on living with macular disease.

• Macular Society Support Groups can help you to beat the isolation of macular disease, by connecting you with other local people who know what you’re going through – offering support and companionship.

• Our research programme is focused on finding new treatments and a cure to Beat Macular Disease forever.

Macular Society
PO Box 1870, Andover SP10 9AD
01264 350 551
macularsociety.org
info@macularsociety.org

@MacularSociety

/macularsociety