

Skills for Seeing

Support throughout central vision loss

Learning how to make the best use of your remaining vision.

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

Introduction

All macular conditions affect the centre of the retina, the macula, at the back of the eye. Each person is affected differently, depending on the size and location of the damage.

Having a macular condition needn't mean losing control of your life. Some people can learn to use the undamaged parts of their central vision more effectively.

Learning new skills for seeing can help with daily activities like reading, getting about, cooking, looking after yourself or watching TV.

We teach two techniques to help people with central vision loss use their remaining vision more effectively: eccentric viewing and steady eye strategy.

People who learn these skills often say they feel more confident and have more control over their lives.

Eccentric viewing

This technique involves identifying and using the healthiest parts of your macula.

Many people discover eccentric viewing by accident. By scanning what they want to see, they find an area of their vision that gives them a clearer image.

This may mean they look slightly above, below, or to the left or right of an object to see it more clearly. For example, you may look slightly above someone's head to see their face because you can't see it clearly if you look straight at them.

You may use different parts of your vision to do different things; near tasks such as reading may use one area of vision and spotting landmarks another.

Working with a coach, you will learn which parts of your remaining vision work best for a variety of tasks. With time and practice, eccentric viewing can become automatic.

Steady eye strategy

Steady eye strategy is a technique that helps your ability to read. When we read we usually hold the page still and move our eyes from left to right across the text.

This scanning movement becomes automatic as we learn to read. If you lose your central vision, this way of reading no longer works; the damaged part of the macula will block out the words.

The technique involves keeping your eyes still and moving the text through the best part of your vision. This can help you read faster and more accurately.

This technique is harder to learn than eccentric viewing because it always needs conscious thought to overcome the scanning reflex. It is particularly useful for

people who have a very small part of central vision which is still clear.

People with central vision loss can use either eccentric viewing or steady eye strategy, or both together.

Will it work for me?

Not everyone needs or is able to learn these techniques. It depends on the size and location of the damage to your macula. It also depends on how much you are prepared to practice.

The techniques work best for people with both eyes affected by macular disease.

However, if you are only affected in one eye it may still be useful. Learning the skills now can help if the second eye also becomes affected in the future.

These techniques won't make your vision the way it was before your macula was damaged. However, they may help you use your remaining vision more effectively. Learning these skills will not damage your vision.

Everyone can benefit from understanding their own vision better, learning about the benefits of lighting and how to use low vision aids more effectively.

Where can I get training?

The Macular Society provides free training. We can also help you find training run by local societies for visually impaired people, opticians, optometrists, low vision therapists or rehabilitation officers.

Helpline

Contact us for more information or to register for our Skills for Seeing training.

0300 3030 111
Monday – Friday
9am – 5pm

help@
macularsociety.org

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

We rely on donations to fund support services and research to find a cure. To donate please go to www.macularsociety.org/donate or call 01264 350 551.



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