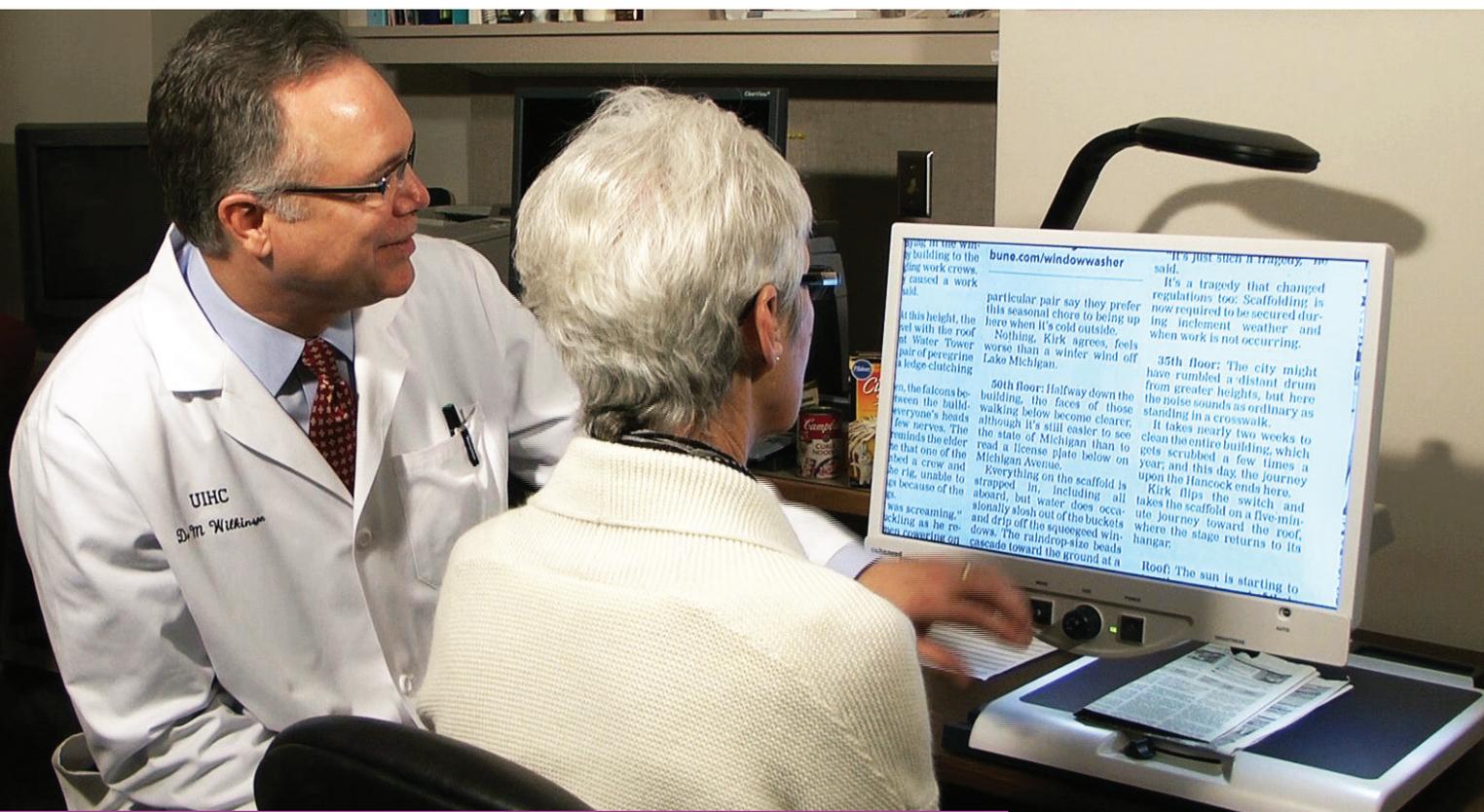


Vision Rehabilitation: Helping People with Low Vision



A program of the National
Institutes of Health



Help Raise Awareness About the Benefits of Vision Rehabilitation

When vision can no longer be improved through surgery or medicine, there are other ways to help a person adjust to vision loss and still maintain independence and a quality lifestyle. Among its many activities, the National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) of the National Eye Institute (NEI) is dedicated to raising awareness about vision rehabilitation for people with vision loss and their family, friends, and caregivers. The NEHEP Low Vision Education Program includes facts about low vision and a variety of educational materials designed to help people learn where to turn for hope and help.

As health and social service professionals who work with people with vision loss, you can play an important role in encouraging these individuals to seek out services that can help them to remain independent and enjoy an active life.



What is low vision?

Low vision is a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by standard eyeglasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery. Activities like reading, shopping, cooking, writing, and watching TV may be hard to do. The consequences of vision loss may leave people feeling anxious, helpless, and depressed. So, it is important to remind them that there is hope.

What is vision rehabilitation?

Vision rehabilitation helps people adapt to vision loss and maintain their current lifestyle. A vision rehabilitation program offers a wide range of services, including training in the use of magnifiers and other adaptive devices, ways to complete daily living skills safely and independently, guidance on modifying residences, and information on where to locate resources and support. These programs typically include a team of professionals consisting of a primary eye care professional and an optometrist or ophthalmologist specializing in low vision. Occupational therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, certified low vision therapists, counselors, and social workers may also be a part of this team.

What causes low vision?

Low vision is usually caused by eye diseases or other health conditions. Some of these include age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetes, and glaucoma; diseases for which older adults are at higher risk. Eye injuries and birth defects are other causes. Whatever the cause, lost vision often cannot be restored. It can, however, be managed with proper treatment and vision rehabilitation.

What are the signs of low vision?

Difficulty with any of the following—even when wearing glasses or contact lenses—could be an early warning sign of vision loss or eye disease:

- Recognizing faces
- Getting around the neighborhood
- Sewing or fixing things around the house
- Selecting and matching the color of clothes

The sooner vision loss or eye disease is detected, the greater the chances of keeping the remaining vision.

How many people have low vision?

According to NEI, 4.2 million Americans ages 40 and older are visually impaired. Of these, 3 million have low vision. By 2030, when the last baby boomers turn 65, the number of Americans who have visual impairments is projected to reach 7.2 million, with 5 million having low vision.

Who is at higher risk for low vision?

Vision loss can affect anyone at any age, but low vision is most common for those over age 65. African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are at a higher risk for vision loss from diseases such as glaucoma and diabetic eye disease, while whites are more at risk for vision loss from age-related macular degeneration.

Low vision resources

NEHEP offers a variety of educational resources to share with people with vision loss and their loved ones to help them learn more about low vision and how vision rehabilitation can help. Our resources are not copyrighted, so you may reproduce them without permission.

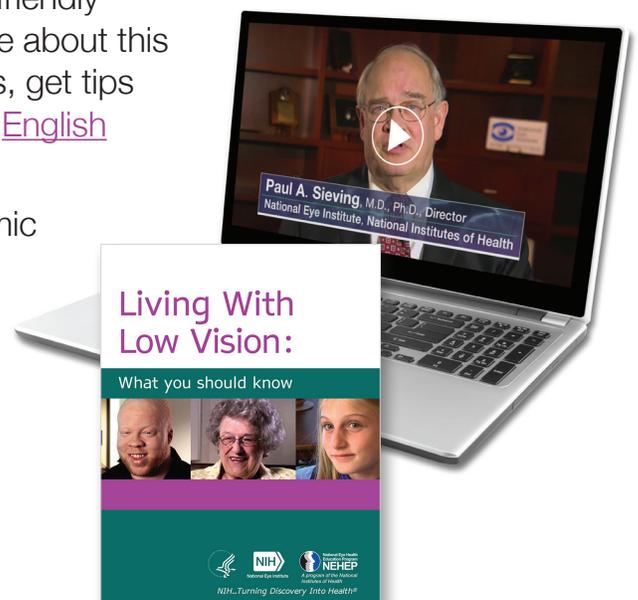
Living With Low Vision: What you should know Booklet—This booklet helps people with vision loss and their families better understand vision rehabilitation. It describes how to get help and live more safely and independently. Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Stories of Hope and Independence Video and Testimonials—These videos provide an overview of low vision and highlight individuals who have learned to make the most of their remaining sight to maintain their independence. Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Living With Low Vision: Stories of Hope and Independence (for health professionals)—This [video](#) is designed to help health professionals learn more about vision rehabilitation. Share it with your colleagues to see how you can help patients and clients with low vision.

NEI Website—The NEI website has a consumer-friendly section on low vision where people can learn more about this condition, find help for a loved one with vision loss, get tips on managing medications, and more. Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Presentation and Speaker's Guide—This dynamic [PowerPoint presentation and speaker's guide](#) for health professionals and community educators delivers key information about low vision and the benefits of vision rehabilitation services.



Living With Low Vision: How You Can Help Webinar—Our [archived Web-based presentation](#) is designed to inform health and social service providers about how to determine if someone is having vision problems; where to turn for information and assistance; and how to address the depression, anxiety, and confusion people with vision loss often experience.

Infographics and Infocards—These inspirational graphics in [English and Spanish](#) can be used on websites and social media pages to promote vision rehabilitation.

Drop-In Article—This article—available both in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)—is ready for use in newsletters, magazines, newspapers, and blogs to teach readers about low vision and vision rehabilitation.

Social Media Messages—We provide suggested [Facebook and Twitter messages about low vision](#) to post on your social media outlets.

For more information and additional ideas on how to use these resources, visit the NEHEP Low Vision Program Web page at:

<https://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/programs/lowvision>

 YouTube: [/NEINIH](#)



Facebook: [/NationalEyeHealthEducationProgram](#)



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National Eye Health
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