

LowVision ALERT

by Joyce Render Cohen with
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MOODBOARD/PUNCHSTOCK

SOME TIPS FOR EASIER READING:

- Increase lighting by using task lamps to direct light on what you want to read.
- Consider simple magnifying devices. You can shop for yourself, but an occupational therapist can help you make the best choices. (Call your chapter for referrals.)
- Get more help. Call us for your state's agency for visual rehabilitation, nearby Lions Club, and others in your area.

Playing it safe: Prevent falls, cuts, or burns

Living with low vision has changed how I live. My goal is to enjoy my home and stay out of the emergency room! And the two most dangerous rooms for everyone are the bathroom and the kitchen.

First stop, the kitchen

The cuts and burns I got during food preparation made me call for help. A specialist from my state's Services for Blind and Visually Impaired came to my home to assess safety and give me instructions. (An occupational therapist specializing in low vision could also give advice and training.) For example, I was taught the best way to hold the food and the knife when cutting.

I now store knives in a knife block, but magnetic strips on the wall or holders in a drawer would work equally well. We need to know where they point when we reach for one. I have dark cutting surfaces for chopping light foods and lighter surfaces for chopping dark foods. And I have a kitchen fire extinguisher handy for grease fires.

On to the bathroom

I need extra lighting by the sink for makeup and other grooming. Towels are within easy reach to wipe up spills. We have a walk-in shower with a sturdy bath chair and a non-slip rubber mat. An OT helped us place grab bars strategically. I use soap-on-a-rope and I keep an extra reacher close by for dropped items. I don't use decorative scatter rugs in the bathrooms or anywhere else. I've also replaced ceramic and glass soap dishes, drinking glasses, and toothbrush holders with plastic ones.



Other rooms

What I learned in the kitchen and bathroom applies to the rest of the house. I use higher wattage lightbulbs and more lamps everywhere. Making sure that there is good contrast is something I never considered prior to vision loss, but now I think of colors whenever I buy something. Contrast and/or texture can help define paths through rooms.

The living room area rug has been secured with a nonskid mat and carpet tape under the edges. We were lucky to have floors with low level carpet and tile. If your floor covering is high pile or shag you may want to think about replacing it. Besides the tripping hazard, you'd eliminate the possibility of stepping on a hidden sharp object.

Plugs and cords are also tripping hazards. I keep cords wound up with twist ties and use cordless appliances whenever I can. These changes are worth it. After all, home is a place to enjoy, not to be fearful of cuts, burns, or falls!

Joyce Render Cohen and her sister Evelyn Render Katz, OTR/L, often give talks on meeting the challenges of vision loss.

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Also try these steps:

- Adjust your monitor. Most have keys for brightness directly under the screen. Others may have them on the keyboard. Or be bold: go into your “system settings” and look for controls to change color, brightness, and contrast. Remember, if you don’t like something, you can always change it back.
- Increase text size. Look for a set of small, medium, and larger boxes or a plus and minus sign on the page. Or try the icon called PAGE in the tool bar, which offers text size adjustments.

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