

# LowVision ALERT

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**Meet the challenge of looking good despite low vision and a tight budget.**

## Dress for success

Vision loss and tough economic times can make dressing for success a double challenge. Looking your best is important for getting and keeping a job and, more important, for keeping your self-confidence high. In the last 20 years living with MS and low vision, I've had to make changes in grooming, shopping and organizing my clothes so I can put together a look that expresses my sense of style. Let me share what I've learned.

- Shop in your closet first—go through everything with the help of a friend or family member to see what fits, looks current and is in good condition.
- Bargain hunt thrift shops, discount stores, wholesale clubs and even department stores (look for advertised sales and coupons online).
- Shop online or use catalogues if getting to a store is difficult.
- Look for classic styles in easy-care fabrics. Dark colors are more forgiving of stains than light colors. If you work in an office, a basic dark sport jacket or suit works for both men and women. It can be paired with a variety of shirts or blouses.
- Put together outfits and organize them together on hangers.
- Pull together what you're going to wear the night before when you have time to inspect, organize and be creative.
- Label clothes in colors that look alike for easy identification. (A brass safety pin in the collar or waist band of a black item distinguishes it from a navy one.)
- Put a stitch in contrasting color on the toe to distinguish black socks from dark blue ones. If your shoes are in similar styles, use contrasting tape inside to color code.



- Good lighting in your dressing area is important—natural spectrum or daylight reveals colors, spots or stains.
- Inspect seams and buttons regularly with magnification and good light to make sure clothes don't need repair.
- Make sure your shoes are polished and don't forget your local shoe repairman to make even old shoes look new.
- Before you go out, have a family member or friend give you the once over if you're not sure you're stain free or have the right color on.

### Easy care clothes

I make sure my khakis, pants and jeans are spotless and wrinkle free. I steer clear of linen and fabrics that wrinkle. Jersey or "traveler" knits have taken their place. I stay within my budget by investing in a few good-quality pieces that I can mix and match and wear for years. I update with new accessories when my wardrobe needs a lift.

### Makeup tips

My hair and makeup routines have changed with my vision loss, too. I found a good hairstylist who cuts my hair in a style that's flattering and easy to maintain. I can style it myself with a blow-dryer (I've marked the settings with bump dots and puff paint), using my fingers or a brush and comb, so I don't have to handle a curling iron or rollers. I drape a towel that con-

trasts with my hair color on the rack just opposite my mirror so I can see the outline of my hair. I use a magnifying mirror.

I've simplified my routines, too. I use fewer products and identify them by the shapes of their bottles or bold printed labels. I no longer wear eye shadow. I stick to light base, blush, automatic pencil eyeliner, two basic sheer lip colors and mascara. To apply mascara I bring the wand to my eyelash and blink to move my lashes to the wand. I use a light textured cream foundation that comes in a squirt bottle. I know just how much one squirt delivers. I've learned to apply a thin line of liquid or cream foundation down the center of my face and use my fingers to blend up and out. I use a makeup brush too, but fingers may give you more control if you have to see by feeling the landmarks of your face.

For more tips on applying makeup, see the American Foundation for the Blind's Web site: [afb.org/seniorsite](http://afb.org/seniorsite). It also has tips on shaving and personal grooming for men with low vision.

You don't have to let vision loss keep you from looking great and feeling good about yourself.

The authors give educational talks about living with low vision. Joyce has personal experience; her sister Evelyn is an OT specializing in low-vision rehabilitation at the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation in Omaha, Neb.

