Macular Society

Lighting

Support throughout central vision loss

Good lighting in your home can help you make the best use of your vision.
This leaflet is also available on audio CD.

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

We all need good lighting at home. Light becomes even more important as we age.

A 65 year old person needs at least twice as much light than they needed at 21.

If you also have poor vision then good light is vital. Many people who think they need low vision aids, actually just need better lighting.

At home we use two main types of lighting; general lighting and task lighting.

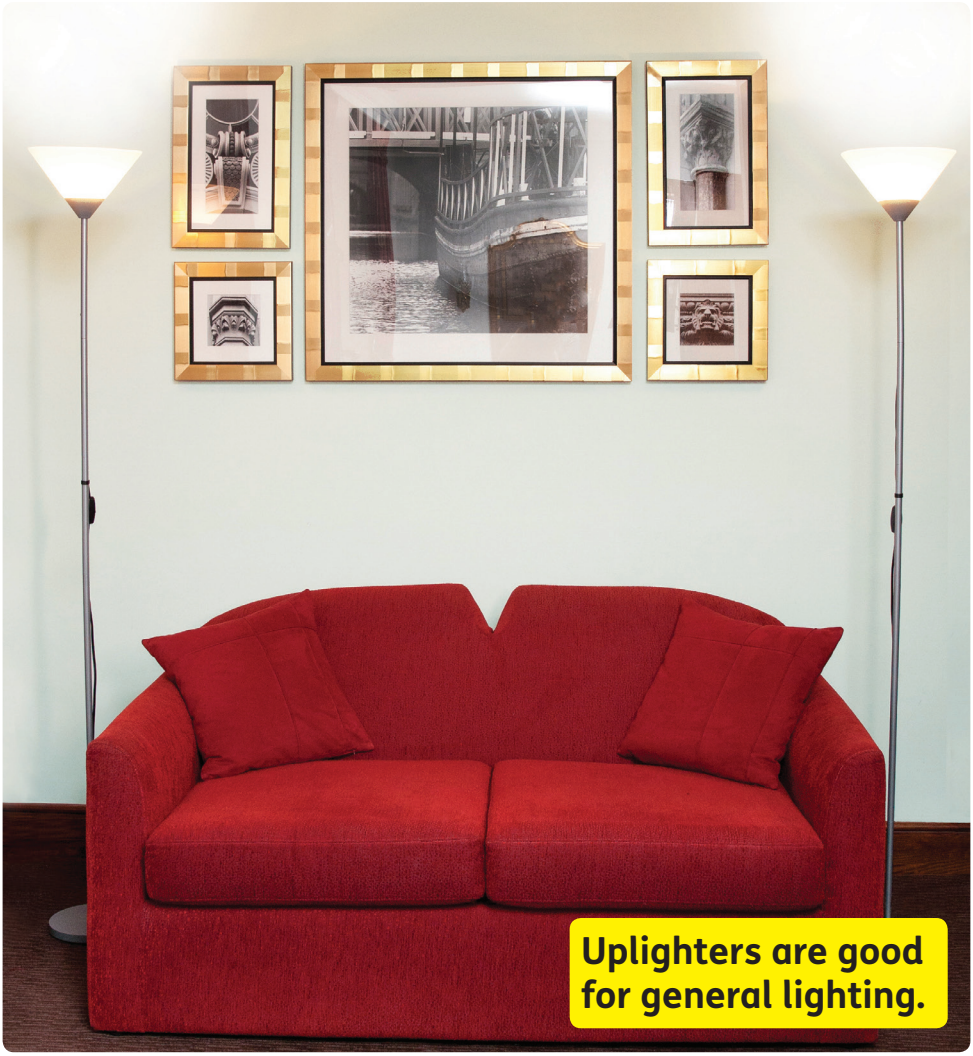
General lighting

General lighting around the home needs to be bright and even, without causing glare.

- Have several light sources around the room rather than one bright light in the middle of the room. Try moving them about until you get an even spread of light and no dark corners.
- Shade bulbs so that the bulb itself cannot shine into your eyes.
- Round paper shades are good at diffusing light in the room.
- Uplighters are good because they

bounce light onto the ceiling and back into the room.

- Avoid spotlights. They can cause confusing bright and dark patches; they also cause glare.

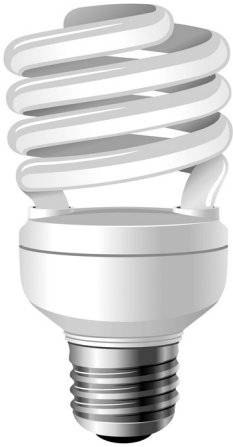


Uplighters are good for general lighting.

- 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 house.

Light bulbs

Traditional tungsten light bulbs are being phased out because they get hot and use lots of energy.



New low energy bulbs are quicker to warm up.

To begin with, many people did not like low energy bulbs. Newer versions are much better. They are now quicker to warm up and are available in a wider range of brightness levels, shapes and fittings.

Look for the lumen level, which is an indicator of brightness. A lumen level of 600 is roughly equivalent to an old 60 watt bulb.

- Choose bulbs with a pearl or frosted finish to diffuse light evenly. Clear bulbs can create a harsh light and confusing shadows.

- 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.
- Fluorescent tubes produce less heat and use less energy but are usually only used in kitchens. They should be fitted lengthways in a room to distribute the light as evenly as possible.

Bulbs also come in a range of colour 'temperatures'. Different people prefer different colour temperatures. Bulbs which have a cool colour temperature give off a blue-ish light. Warmer colour bulbs give off a more yellow light.

Colour temperature is measured in Kelvin (K). The higher the K level the cooler the appearance of the light. The range 3500K–4000K is considered neutral.

More tips to improve general lighting and contrast.

- Open the curtains

wide and keep the windows clean.

- Remove net curtains.
- Use vertical or roller blinds to control the amount of light coming in and to prevent it shining in your eyes.
- Wearing blue blocker filter lenses in your glasses can help improve contrast and reduce glare.
- Use colour and contrast to pick out objects such as light switches. Consider painting walls and doors different colours.
- Fit white door handles on a dark door.
- Pale walls and ceilings reflect light but white walls in a very bright room might cause glare.

Task lighting

Extra lighting is needed for activities like reading, preparing food or other close work. Using task lighting effectively can make a surprisingly big difference.

It can:

- improve the contrast of text by making print look blacker on a white background;

- 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. They should shine onto the task, not into your eyes;
- be stable so that they cannot be knocked over;
- stay cool. If a lamp gets hot you will find it uncomfortable and you may even burn yourself if you touch it by mistake.

Task lighting need to be positioned below eye level.

Light emitting diodes (LED) are widely used in illuminated magnifiers and battery-powered portable lights.

Mains versions are getting cheaper. LEDs last a long time, use very little energy and do not get hot. Small versions can be carried in handbags and pockets.

When buying a task lamp, consider:

- What activities do you want it for? Would a table top, floor-standing or wall-mounted type suit you 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 level which is comfortable for you.

Halving the distance between an object and the light will increase the amount of light on the object fourfold.

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. This helps reduce glare and fatigue.

Further information

'Choosing energy saving light bulbs for your home', by Ricability and Thomas Pocklington Trust

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

020 8995 0880

The RNIB has a leaflet 'Improve the lighting in your home' and other helpful products.

www.rnib.org.uk

0303 123 9999

For a list of equipment and suppliers please call our helpline

0300 3030 111

How we can help

We are the national charity for anyone affected by central vision loss. We provide free information and support to improve lives today. We fund research so that one day we can overcome macular disease.

You don't have to be a Society member to use our services. We provide:

Helpline – confidential advice and information on all aspects of macular disease, including diagnosis, treatment and living with central vision loss.

0300 3030 111
Monday to Friday
9am – 5pm
help@
macularsociety.org

Counselling – It's natural to feel upset or angry when you're told you have a macular condition. Many people find it helps to talk, in confidence, to a professional counsellor.

Support Groups – we have a network of almost 300 local groups.

Befriending – Having a macular condition can leave you feeling isolated especially if it's hard to get out and about.

Your dedicated befriender will telephone regularly for a friendly, social chat about anything you like including, but not always, macular disease.

Advocacy – help accessing treatments.

Skills for seeing – training to make best use of remaining sight.

Treatment buddy – chat to people who've had treatment by injection for support and advice.

Charles Bonnet buddy – chat to others who've experienced visual hallucinations as a result of a macular condition.

Join us

Many people join the Macular Society so that they can make a difference.

Your support now will give desperately needed help to people losing their sight.

To join today call

01264 350 551

info@ macularsociety.org

and be part of a campaign for better care and fund research to find a cure.

AMD causes more than half of all blindness in Britain. 600,000 people have AMD and another 200 people are diagnosed every day.

We urgently need to find a cure and you can help today. We are the only UK charity dedicated to funding research into macular disease.

To make your vital donation and move us closer to a cure call us today or go online.

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