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## Overcome Vision Challenges and Gain Independence

### Eye Health and Vision Challenges

We all know that as we age, our bodies change and our vision does as well. According to the American Optometric Association, the incidence of eye health problems increases with age. Vision deficits can also result from neurologic issues, such as multiple sclerosis, stroke, brain injury, etc. Many of these vision changes happen gradually, and may not be noticeable until they begin causing complications in daily life.

Vision changes will likely necessitate updating your glasses over the years; however, you may get to a point when glasses are not enough. Low vision is a term used to describe visual deficits unable to be fully corrected by glasses, surgery or other procedure.

**Symptoms that may indicate a low vision condition include difficulty with the following:**

- **Reading small print in close tasks** - You may need to change the distance at which you are holding the reading material, or you may look for information in a larger print size. It can become particularly difficult to read medication labels or instructions.
- **Seeing detail in low light** - When you are trying to read your mail, you may find that you need to turn on the overhead light or a desk light. Or, you may have difficulty reading the dial for the oven or the thermostat without additional light.
- **Regulating glare** - Glare from the sun can make driving more difficult. It can also make it hard to see the computer or television screen.
- **Adjusting to lighting changes** - Your eyes may take longer to adjust when moving from inside to outside or vice versa.

- **Distinguishing contrast** - You may discover problems matching dark socks to slacks, or that you trip on a curb or edge of a step that you didn't see. Many aspects in the home have low contrast, such as differences between flooring, that can make navigation difficult.

## **Low Vision Help**

If you have low vision, an occupational therapist (OT) can assist you in developing skills and techniques to use your vision to the highest degree possible. An OT can provide help with:

- Problem-solving through the activities with which you are having difficulty, and developing solutions to help you remain independent.
- Teaching you how to modify your activities.
- Recommending the best lighting for your situation.
- Instructing you how to use a device such as a magnifier.
- Offering suggestions for setting up your home in order to make everyday tasks safer and easier.

Contact Sheltering Arms at (804) 764-1001 to request an evaluation with an occupational therapist or visit [www.ShelteringArms.com](http://www.ShelteringArms.com) for more information.

*\*Please note that if vision changes happen suddenly or symptoms are severe, it is important that you consult with your eye doctor immediately.*

This article was written by Ann Christopher, OTR/L, Occupational Therapist

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**Sheltering Arms** Physical Rehabilitation Centers offer a network of comprehensive rehabilitation and support services in Central Virginia.

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