

LIVING WITH EYE CONDITIONS AND SIGHT LOSS

JEWISH CARE

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This leaflet has been created by Jewish Care to provide information and practical advice about living with sight loss.

EYE CONDITIONS AND THE CAUSES OF SIGHT LOSS

Sight loss is the decrease of a person's ability to see to the point that it causes problems, which cannot be corrected to "normal levels".

Sight loss affects people of all ages and ranges from mild impairment to total blindness. Some people lose their sight slowly over long periods of time. Some people may lose their sight quickly and then find it becomes stable. Others will fall somewhere in between.

There are many eye conditions that cause sight loss, with Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) being the main cause of blindness in UK adults. Other key causes of sight loss are Glaucoma, Cataracts and Diabetic Retinopathy.

Usher Syndrome is the one condition found mainly amongst Jewish people and affects both hearing and vision.

SIGHT LOSS FACTS AND FIGURES

- There are almost two million people in the UK living with sight loss.
- Around 360,000 people in the UK are registered as blind or partially sighted.
- 1 in 5 people aged 75 and 1 in 2 aged 90 and over in the UK are living with sight loss.
- There are over 25,000 blind and partially sighted children in the UK aged 0-16.
- Over one-third of older people with sight loss in the UK are also living with depression.
- With an ageing population, sight loss is on the increase: it is estimated that by 2050 there could be nearly four million people living with sight loss in the UK.
- Over half of all sight loss in the UK is preventable.
- Everyone should visit their optometrist for an eye examination at least once every two years.

EYE CONDITIONS AND THE CAUSES OF SIGHT LOSS

Sight loss can have an impact on all aspects of your daily life - from travel to cooking to the feelings you have about losing your sight.

With a good outlook and a few changes - some small and some not so small - you can lead a full and active life.

READING BOOKS, MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

If you enjoy reading, there are plenty of options to choose from.

Large print: Large print books are either 16 or 18 point font and giant print books are anything larger. You can borrow large print books from your local library and giant print books from the RNIB.

- **Amazon** - www.amazon.co.uk
- **The Large Print Book Shop** - www.largeprintbookshop.co.uk
- **W. F. Howes Ltd** - www.wfhowes.co.uk
- **Ulverscroft** - www.ulverscroft.com
- **Large and giant print books of Jewish interest are available from JBI International** - www.jbilibrary.org

eBooks: An eBook is an Electronic Book, which is just the same as a print book, except that you read it using a device called an eBook Reader (or eReader) or on an eBook App on your computer, smartphone or tablet. All eBook readers allow you to enlarge text, and many allow you to change the shape, colour and contrast of text. Many eBook readers also enable electronic speech or can work with Braille devices.

Braille: If Braille is the format you prefer, you can find everything from books, magazines and newspapers to labels on all sorts of products. The RNIB are the largest provider of Braille products in the UK.

If you want Jewish interest Braille books, JBI International have the largest selection.

Talking news and books: Talking books, also known as audio books, are great for people with sight loss, but are popular with sighted people too.

In the UK, two charities - the RNIB and Calibre - provide talking books for visually impaired people. The RNIB also provide a wide selection of newspapers and magazines in audio format.

Jewish Care's KC Shasha Centre is the only UK provider of Jewish interest audio format books, news and magazines.

For more information about these services see the useful contacts at the end of this document.

Audio description: Audio description (AD) is narration that describes what is going on on-screen in a film or TV program, and also at live events. AD is available on many TV programs broadcast in the UK, and on DVDs to rent or buy.

As well as offering special seating for disabled people, many theatres, museums and galleries, offer AD for visually impaired people.

VocalEyes is a UK Charity providing audio described events throughout the UK. To find an event near you, visit their website: **www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk**

COOKING

If you enjoy cooking, whether for yourself or for family and friends, losing your sight shouldn't stop you. It does mean that you'll need to adapt how you cook and you'll also need to make some changes to your kitchen to keep you safe.

Kitchen products you may find helpful are:

- coloured chopping boards
- coloured mixing bowls
- liquid level indicators
- large digit or talking weighing scales
- colour coded or talking measuring cups and spoons
- talking thermometers
- talking labels
- talking timers
- bump dots

TECHNOLOGY

The range of technology available for visually impaired people is great and growing.

Assistive technology: Assistive technology (AT) refers to technologies that are made to support people with specific impairments. For visually impaired people, these fall into three main categories:

- **Screen readers** – a piece of software that reads the text on a screen out loud.
- **Magnifiers** – either hand held magnifiers that magnify printed material or computer software that magnifies what is on a screen.
- **Screen readers** – a piece of software that reads the text on a screen out loud.
- **Braille devices** – these use a keyboard style device to display Braille characters

Mainstream technology: This is technology that is designed for everyone to use. For people with sight loss, there are many mainstream technologies that are very helpful, such as dictation software or voice recognition like Siri.

To find out more, visit the *using technology* section on the RNIB website.

SPORTS AND LEISURE

You may be surprised by just how many sporting and leisure activities are available for visually impaired people. From cricket to football to rock climbing, you're sure to find an activity that suits you.

Visit the [British Blind Sport website](#) to find out what's on offer.

EMOTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Living with sight loss can have an impact on your emotional life. It can affect the way you feel about yourself and those around you.

The physical limitations that you experience, as well as others' attitudes towards your impairment, can sometimes be very frustrating. You may also experience feelings of social isolation and loneliness, so having a good social and support network is vital.

USEFUL CONTACTS

KC SHASHA (JEWISH CARE'S TALKING BOOKS SERVICE)

Subscription service providing audiobooks on loan and a weekly version of the Jewish Chronicle and other audio magazines.

Telephone: 020 8922 2333

Email: kcshasha@jcare.org

Website: www.jewishcare.org/talkingbooks

JEWISH CARE'S HELPLINE

A free confidential helpline that can provide advice and information about support on offer either from Jewish Care or other local service providers.

Telephone: 020 8922 2222

Email: helpline@jcare.org

Website: www.jewishcare.org

ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BLIND PEOPLE (RNIB)

Range of services to support people with sight loss, including emotional, practical and information.

Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

ACTION FOR BLIND PEOPLE

Practical and emotional advice and support, including local support groups, resource centres and accessible hotels.

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

MIDDLESEX ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

A range of local services in Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond including home visit, counselling, assessment, employment, information and advice about equipment.

Telephone: 020 8423 5141

Email: info@aftb.org.uk

EYEHELP.CO.UK

Website to help people take care of their eyes.

Website: www.eyehelp.co.uk

THE GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND ASSOCIATION

Provides guide dogs, mobility and other rehabilitation services for blind and partially sighted people throughout the UK.

Telephone: 0118 983 5555

Email: guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk

Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

THOMAS POCKLINGTON TRUST

Support services, research, publications and lobbying.

Telephone: 020 8995 0880

Email: info@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Website: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

DEAFBLIND UK

Deafblind UK support people who have both sight and hearing loss.

Telephone/Textphone: 01733 358 100

Email: info@deafblind.org.uk

Website: www.deafblind.org.uk

SENSE

Sense offer support to people who are deafblind or have associated disabilities including an information and advice service.

Telephone: 0300 330 9256 or 020 7520 0972

Textphone: 0300 330 9256 or 020 7520 0972

Email: info@sense.org.uk

Website: Online through a sign language interpreter from their website: www.sense.org.uk

THE MACULAR SOCIETY

The Macular Society provide support for anyone who has any form of macular disease.

Telephone: 0300 3030 111

Email: help@macularsociety.org

Website: www.macularsociety.org

INTERNATIONAL GLAUCOMA ASSOCIATION (IGA)

The IGA support people with Glaucoma. It also educates around early intervention and prevention of the condition.

Telephone: 01233 64 81 70

Website: www.glaucoma-association.com

RP FIGHTING BLINDNESS

RP Fighting Blindness supports people with Retinitis Pigmentosa. It also funds research into the condition's treatment and cure.

Telephone: 0845 123 2354

Email: info@rpfightingblindness.org.uk

Website: www.rpfightingblindness.org.uk

NYSTAGMUS NETWORK

The Nystagmus Network is run by people with Nystagmus to support others with the condition.

Telephone: 029 2045 4242 or 0845 634 2630

Email: info@nystagmusnet.org

Website: ww.nystagmusnet.org

**Please contact 020 8922 2450
if you require this information in
larger print or an alternative format.**

JEWISH CARE

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