

## VISION AND FALLING

We all learn to live with ‘not quite perfect’ eyesight. So:

1. Have your eyes checked at least every two years by an eye specialist or optometrist. Many of us would see much better with new glasses.
2. Clean your glasses regularly. They get very dirty just from being used. This can be done with soap or detergent, in the kitchen sink or even in the shower. You’ll be amazed at the difference! Use the cloths available from optometrist shops or chemists. Don’t use tissues before washing your glasses well – that can scratch your glasses lenses.

**When you get new glasses, take care moving around outdoors. You can be at risk of a fall, so be extra careful until you get used to the lens changes. Take your time, hold onto the rails or other street furniture to steady yourself and be vigilant about scanning ahead as you ‘heel-and-toe’ walk and negotiate kerbs and steps.**

## Cataracts

If you have cataracts and have had a fall, see your doctor and talk about an early referral for cataract treatment. Cataracts can make it difficult to see when moving

about, and research shows a link between cataracts and falls. Some lighting conditions, such as glare, can also make it more difficult to see with cataracts.

## **Bifocals and multifocals**

Bifocals and multifocals are good for seeing long and short distances with the same pair of glasses. However, they make step edges, paving edges, kerbs, and inside and outside stairs difficult to see. Be wary and learn to adjust your head position to see better. Indoors, it may be satisfactory to take bifocals off when going up steps or stairs. Consider an extra pair of glasses for outdoor walking as bifocals can increase risk of falls.

**An eye specialist can give you eye exercises and low vision aids to make better use of your vision.**

## **Moving around and about**

1. When walking, look about six steps ahead to give you time to adjust your steps to potential hazards.
2. When moving from outside to inside, wait until your eyes adjust before coming in. Take sunglasses off when coming inside.
3. Wear light-coloured clothing so you can be easily seen when out and about, particularly on dull or wintry days.

## **At home**

1. Buy 24 watt (1450 lumen) globes for visibility, and use cool rather than warm globes. Using lower wattage light globes won't save on power bills. LED lights are the most cost-effective long-lasting globes and are easily available.
2. Clutter can make seeing hazards more difficult. Make sure your hallways, porches and verandas are free from unnecessary items. Don't use thoroughfares as storage areas.
3. Get rid of furniture with castors (like mobile TV stands), or with wide legs (such as table legs) that can stick out and intrude into the walkways. Get rid of sausage-shaped draft excluders used under doors.
4. Check that there is enough colour contrast between the furniture and the floors, walls and curtains. For example, a white coffee table on a white carpet is easy to trip over.

## **Night vision**

If your vision is worse at night (because, for example, you don't have glasses on), then your balance can be worse. You may also become disorientated in the dark. It is important to use some kind of lighting at night. Photosensitive lights that plug into power points can help light up a walkway. These can be bought at supermarkets. Touch lamps, bedside lights and torches are also a good idea. Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairways.

## **If glare is a problem**

1. Buy cheap netting or lace curtains to cover windows to shield from the sun in summer.
2. Reduce glare by checking for reflective surfaces and unshielded light bulbs.
3. Halogen lighting gives off a bright but diffuse light and can reduce glare.
4. Wear a hat outside and wear sunglasses suitable for your eye condition.

**Wear your glasses and have regular checkups.**