



Eye on Health

Older Americans See About Vision Loss

(NAPSA)—One in four people over age 55 experiences severe vision loss. Learning to accept and cope with low vision can be frightening and frustrating—not just for the individual, but also for family and friends.

Among questions asked by seniors: How will fading vision change my life? Can I still do the things I enjoy? These questions need answers and the Braille Institute of America provides solutions—Sound Solutions.

Sound Solutions is a set of 14 free audio tapes that instruct and inspire seniors to lead active, independent lives in spite of their vision loss. These professionally produced tapes employ an effective mix of humor, music, compassion and education.

Following are a few tips for families, friends and individuals who may be experiencing vision loss:

Signs & Symptoms:

- Double vision or straight lines appear curved or wavy
- Difficulty reading small print
- Flashes of light or sudden onset of dark floating spots
- Curtain or veil blocking vision
- Dimming of vision that comes and goes
- Eye pain or persistent irritation, watering or dryness
- Discharge or crusting of eyelids
- Swelling or redness of eye or surrounding area

How to help:

Communicate with the diagnosing doctor until everyone understands how much sight loss has occurred, and what treatments and preventive measures are available.

- Ask if the person needs help. Do not help if you are not asked.
- Don't hover and repeatedly question, "Can you see this?"
- Observe and ask probing questions about what he or she can see. Understand it may be difficult to explain what is seen.



For seniors who are losing their sight, a free set of audio tapes offers encouragement and help.

The Sound Solutions program offers a variety of useful tips and suggestions to simplify daily life and help individuals learn to cope with sight loss.

- Safety pin socks together before placing in the washer and dryer.
- Ask the phone company to provide a phone with large-number buttons at no cost.
- Make a "What Is It?" basket. Put all unidentified objects in the basket, then ask a sighted visitor to describe them.
- Identify medications—if the medicine must be taken two times per day, wrap a rubber band around the bottle two times.
- Find out if there is a hobby or task the individual misses, such as reading or cooking and find ways to adapt favorite leisure activities to low vision.

Sound Solutions is available free of charge from Braille Institute of America. Call 1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553).

Braille Institute of America is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate blindness and severe sight loss as a barrier to a fulfilling life. More information and samples of Sound Solutions can be obtained by visiting the Web site at www.biasoundsolutions.org.