

Protecting your eyes

Support throughout central vision loss

Bright light is painful for many people with macular conditions. You can protect your eyes from glare and ultraviolet light.

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

Glare

Glare is the discomfort and impairment caused by having too much light in the eyes. Everyone will have experienced this at some time; perhaps from the headlights of an oncoming car or when sunlight has shone directly into their eyes.

A number of macular conditions can make glare more of an issue and some people become very sensitive to light. There may be other reasons as well, e.g. cataracts, which scatter light as it enters the eye.

Coping with glare

Here are some simple tips for reducing glare:

- Wear a hat or cap with a broad brim or peak to stop sunlight reaching your eyes.
- Choose a close-fitting style of sunglasses or wrap-around frames that stop light getting in from above or either side.
- Try 'over-shields' which have built in side and brow shields. These are worn over the top of ordinary glasses.



Blue blocking over-shields

- If white paper causes glare while you are reading, try using a transparent plastic ‘overlay’ sheet. If you are writing, yellow paper may be a good option as it is less likely to cause glare.
- If you find computer screens uncomfortable, reduce the brightness or change the ‘view settings’ on a website home page. There are plenty of useful tips online on how best to use technology. A helpful site is mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk.
- Make sure lighting in your own home is bright and even. Lamp bulbs

should be covered by shades and positioned so that light doesn’t shine directly into your eyes. There is more on this in our ‘Lighting’ leaflet.

Ultraviolet light

Ultraviolet light (UV) is a type of electromagnetic radiation, as are radio waves and X-rays. UV light comes from the sun and is invisible to the human eye.

We all know UV light gives us a tan and can cause sunburn if we do not protect ourselves. But many people do not realise that over time their eyes can be

damaged by its effects. Studies suggest that some people could be at a higher risk of developing macular disease because they have low macular pigment, which protects against UV light. Macular pigment is made up of antioxidants such as lutein, which is thought to act as a natural sun screen for the macula.

It is important to protect your eyes from UV light to prevent further damage but unfortunately you cannot reverse any damage that has

already been done. Encourage everyone you know to have regular eye tests and wear hats and sunglasses. Comfortable good quality sunglasses are available for everyone, even babies and children.

Protection from light

There are some important things to remember when choosing sunglasses:

- Make sure you choose a pair with a UV filter.
- Ensure the lenses are of good quality by choosing glasses that have a European CE mark or British Standard

BS EN ISO 12312–1:2013. The amount of UV reaching the eye is measured in nanometres (nm) and you should check this figure on your sunglasses. If sunglasses are marked UV 400 they should block 100% of UV.

- UV filters can be clear. They can be used in ordinary prescription glasses as well as sunglasses and even contact lenses.
- Reflections from sand, snow and water increase the effects of UV light.

Top tip

Never use a tinted lens

for driving at night. You can reduce dazzle from headlights by keeping your windscreen clean inside and out and getting anti-reflection coated lenses for your driving spectacles.

Blue blocking lenses

The problem with traditional sunglasses is that they make things darker. Many people with macular disease find this reduces their level of vision, making it harder to see steps or other hazards.

Blue blocking lenses protect the eyes from blue light (another part of the electromagnetic

spectrum that can cause damage). They also reduce glare without making everything darker. Blue light tends to make things hazy, so blue blocking lenses can sharpen images.

These lenses are usually yellow or orange, although other tints can be added to improve their appearance. Paler yellow lenses are good for indoor use because they work well in artificial light, while dark lenses may be better outside.

Blue blocking lenses can be ordered from low vision services, sensory impairment teams and

resource centres for visually impaired people.

Ordinary prescription glasses can also be made with blue blocking filters. There are no British or European standards for blue blocking lenses, so buy from a reputable company or ask for advice from your optometrist or optician.

For details of suppliers, please contact our helpline 0300 3030 111 or email help@macularsociety.org.

For research references: www.macularsociety.org/resources/references

How we help

We are the national charity for anyone affected by central vision loss. We provide free information and support to improve lives and fund research to overcome macular disease. You don't have to be a Society member to use our services.

We provide:

- helpline – confidential information and advice
0300 3030 111
Monday to Friday
9am – 5pm
help@
macularsociety.org
- confidential counselling

- over 300 Support Groups across the UK
- telephone befrienders to offer support
- advocacy to help access treatments
- skills for seeing training to use remaining sight more effectively
- treatment buddies to offer support and advice about having treatment by injection.

Join us

Call 01264 350 551
info@
macularsociety.org.

Macular conditions cause more than half of all blindness in Britain. 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 help us find a cure and support people with macular conditions text VIEW30 followed by £3, £5 or £10 to 70070.

To donate more than £10 please visit www.macularsociety.org

There is no additional fee for your text. JustTextGiving will not give your telephone number to the Macular Society. Please ask the bill payer for permission before texting.



Macular Society

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