

Tips for Living With Low Vision

Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Toll free 1-888-879-0017

Website: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/blind

The following tips are offered as suggestions to help simplify the activities you perform in your daily living. The concepts of using color contrast, large print, labeling, and organization can be used with all activities of daily living.

To learn more about living with low vision and the adaptive equipment or techniques mentioned in this booklet, contact:

**State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Long-Term Care
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1. Labeling Medications

- ◆ Use a pill organizer.
- ◆ Label bottles with different colors of tape.
- ◆ Use rubber bands around certain prescription bottles.
- ◆ Mark bottle with large print, i.e., C for calcium.

2. Brushing Teeth

- ◆ Put toothpaste on your finger; then place it on the toothbrush.
- ◆ Use toothpaste from a pump dispenser.
- ◆ Squeeze toothpaste directly into your mouth.
- ◆ Squirt toothpaste into a wide-mouth jar; then dip the toothbrush in as needed.

3. Marking Shampoo and Conditioner

- ◆ Put rubber bands around one bottle.
- ◆ Paint one bottle cap.
- ◆ Label in large print.
- ◆ Purchase a brand that combines shampoo and conditioner.

4. Keeping Track of Phone Numbers

- ◆ Memorize numbers using numeric patterns, i.e., 342-3422.
- ◆ Write each number on an index card in bold print.

5. Writing Checks

- ◆ Use large-print checks that are available at all banks.
- ◆ Use a check-writing guide made especially to fit over your checks.
- ◆ Use magnification or enhanced lighting.

6. Organizing Money

Coins

- ◆ The edges of quarters and dimes have ridges.
- ◆ The edges of nickels and pennies are smooth.
- ◆ Nickels are thicker and larger than pennies.
- ◆ The gold dollar coin is larger than a quarter and has smooth edges.
- ◆ A quarter is best kept separate from other coins.

Bills

- ◆ Keep \$1 bills flat and fully extended.
- ◆ Fold \$5 bills with short sides together.
- ◆ Fold \$10 bills in half with long sides together.
- ◆ Fold \$20 bills in half twice.
- ◆ Use specified pockets in your wallet or purse for designated denominations in coins or bills.
- ◆ When making a purchase, tell the cashier what bill denomination you are giving and ask the cashier to identify the change returned.

7. Cleaning House

- ◆ Store all cleaning supplies in a bucket and carry it with you when cleaning.
- ◆ Wear an apron with large pockets for carrying cleaning supplies.
- ◆ Wear soft cotton gloves or socks over your hands to dust instead of a cloth.
- ◆ When wiping flat surfaces (tables, windows, counters), wipe up and down; then left to right to cover the entire area.

8. Inserting an Electrical Plug into an Outlet

- ◆ Place two fingers of one hand around the wall plate to guide the electrical plug held in the other hand.
- ◆ Put bright tape around the outlet.
- ◆ Replace wall socket covers and light switch covers with covers that contrast in color with the wall.

9. Using Appliances

- ◆ Use tactile markings on the dials to identify different settings. Typically, tactile cues are safer and faster.
- ◆ Put brightly colored tape on the dials.
- ◆ Use good lighting around the appliance and keep a flashlight handy.
- ◆ Use hand-held magnifiers where helpful.

10. Cooking Safety

- ◆ Before cooking or baking, organize all ingredients and utensils on a tray.
- ◆ Use scissors more frequently than knives, i.e., cutting pizza, opening packages, etc.
- ◆ To easily locate and remove baked potatoes from the oven, bake the potatoes in a muffin tin.
- ◆ Use a timer with an audible signal to complete a cooking cycle.
- ◆ Use oven mitts as often as possible.

11. Eating and Drinking

- ◆ Pour liquids into contrasting colored containers, i.e., white mug for coffee, dark mug for milk. Insert index finger inside glass to determine top of glass when pouring cold liquids or use a liquid leveler that buzzes in your glass when the liquid is near the top of the glass.
- ◆ Serve foods on plates with contrasting colors, i.e., darker colored foods on a light colored plate. Use the face of a clock to indicate the location of food on a plate, i.e., carrots at 6:00 o'clock, hamburger at 11:00 o'clock, potatoes at 2:00 o'clock.
- ◆ Put salt and pepper in clear dispensers for color contrast. Compare the weight of the shakers as salt is heavier than pepper.
- ◆ Pour seasoning in the palm of your hand first; then sprinkle a pinch at a time over food.
- ◆ Use solid color tablecloths avoiding patterns.

- ◆ Use a cutting board that contrasts in color with the food, i.e., white board for meat, dark board for cheese or celery.
- ◆ When reaching for an item on the table, keep fingers downward, lightly touching the table top to avoid over-turning items.

12. Sewing

- ◆ Use a magnet to pick up needles or pins from the floor.
- ◆ Thread several needles with different colored threads to keep readily available.
- ◆ When sewing on a button that is the same color as the garment, put white tissue paper between the fabric and the button for contrast.
- ◆ Use a tactile ruler or tape measure.

- ◆ To sew a straight seam with a sewing machine, use a magnetic seam guide or put masking tape on the feeder as a guide.
- ◆ Anchor self-threading or wire-loop needle threader by inserting it into a cork or a bar of soap.

WHITE CANE SAFETY LAW

In Wisconsin, motor vehicle operators are required to stop at least 10 feet from a pedestrian carrying a white cane or using a dog guide, who is attempting to cross a street. The rights of pedestrians who are blind or visually impaired are established and protected by state White Cane Laws, Wisconsin statute 346.26(1):

“An operator of a vehicle shall stop the vehicle before approaching closer than 10 feet to a pedestrian who is carrying a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white trimmed with red and which is held in an extended or raised position or who is using a dog guide and shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid accident or injury to the pedestrian. The fact that the pedestrian may be violating any of the laws applicable to pedestrians does not relieve the operator of a vehicle from the duties imposed by this subsection.”