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The Low Vision Examination

## The Low Vision Examination

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### What Is a Low Vision Examination?

If you, a family member, or a friend has one or more eye disorders, such as [glaucoma](#), [cataracts](#), [macular degeneration](#), or [diabetic retinopathy](#), it's important to have a **comprehensive low vision examination** – performed by an [ophthalmologist or optometrist](#) who specializes in [low vision](#) – to determine whether special [low vision optical devices](#), [better lighting](#), [large print](#) reading materials, or other types of training, such as [vision rehabilitation services](#), can help you, your family member, or your friend with low vision to use his or her **functional vision** more effectively.

The Low Vision Examination

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What is the cause of my vision loss?

Is my condition stable, or can I lose more sight?

Is there any treatment for my eye condition?

What is my visual acuity?

Do I have a loss of side (or peripheral) vision?

Will regular eyeglasses help me?

How can I protect my remaining vision?

Do I need any special medications?

Do I qualify as legally blind? If so, what does legally blind actually mean?

Am I entitled to any special services or benefits?

What resources and rehabilitation services are available to help me?

Also, it is helpful to make a list of activities that you want and need to do, such as sewing, playing cards, watching ball games, or going to the theater, and to list the types of reading materials you want – and need – to access. This information can help focus your discussions with your low vision doctor and his or her professional staff.

## **A Helpful Checklist**

Here is a checklist to help you prepare for your low vision exam, brought to you by the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind:

Bring any glasses, adaptive aids, and magnifiers that you are currently using to show the specialist. What do you like or dislike about each item?

Remember that this examination may take longer than one with your optometrist or ophthalmologist. If you have diabetes, be sure to bring a snack with you.

Bring all forms of insurance with you. Keep in mind that many devices or aids will not be covered by your

Questions about activities that are becoming difficult for you, such as reading, meal preparation, or walking indoors and outdoors.

## **An Eye Health Evaluation**

An examination of the external parts of your eyes, including the shape of your pupils and how they react to light; your eyelids and surrounding tissues; your eye muscles, tear ducts, and cornea

A dilated internal examination. Special eye drops will dilate, or open, your pupil, which allows the doctor to look through your enlarged pupil opening and observe the inner parts of your eye, such as the retina and optic nerve.

A tonometry test of the fluid pressure, called intraocular pressure (IOP), within your eyes.

Your doctor may also perform an optical coherence tomography (OCT) test, which produces a high-resolution cross-sectional image of the retina. This test can also be used to provide a clearer picture of the layers of your retina.

## **A Low Vision Refraction, or Visual Acuity Testing**

Your doctor will use specialized low vision eye charts that are different from the eye charts used in a regular eye examination.

These special low vision eye charts contain different-sized letters and numbers that can help determine the sharpness or clarity of both your near (reading) and distance vision.

Here are some examples of specialized low vision eye charts: