

EMORY EYE CENTER

Low Vision Clinic — located on
the Fifth Floor of Building B
The Emory Clinic
1365B Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta, GA 30322



For more information or to schedule
an appointment, call 404-778-2020.

Low Vision and You


Restoring Sight for the Visually Impaired Patient



*Emory Eye Center
The Low Vision Clinic*

EMORY HEALTHCARE

In this booklet, we hope to make you, the patient, more aware of what low vision is and what it can mean to you. The following pages contain a description on what low vision is, information on current devices that may help you, and stories of some of our patients who have been helped.



LOW VISION CLINIC FACULTY

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WHAT IS LOW VISION?

Low vision means that even with regular glasses, contact lenses, medicine or surgery, people find everyday tasks requiring vision difficult. Reading the mail, shopping, cooking, seeing the TV and writing can seem challenging.

The reality is that millions of Americans lose some of their vision every year. Irreversible vision loss is most common among people over age 65.

IS VISION LOSS JUST PART OF GETTING OLDER?

No. Some normal changes in our eyes and vision occur as we get older. However, these changes usually don't lead to low vision.

Most people develop low vision because of health conditions like diabetes, and eye diseases like macular degeneration, cataract and glaucoma. A few people develop vision loss after eye injuries or from birth defects. While vision that's lost usually cannot be restored, many people can make the most of the vision they have.


Your eye care professional can tell the difference between normal changes in the aging eye and those caused by eye diseases.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE LOW VISION?

There are many signs that can signal vision loss. For example, even with your regular glasses, do you have difficulty:

- Recognizing faces of friends and relatives?
- Doing things that require you to see well up close, like reading, cooking, sewing, or fixing things around your house?
- Picking out and matching the color of your clothes?
- Doing things at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to?
- Reading street and bus signs or the names of stores?

Vision changes like these could be early warning signs of eye disease. Usually, the earlier your problem is diagnosed, the better the chance of successful treatment and keeping your remaining vision.



WHAT CAN HELP ME IF I HAVE LOW VISION?

Today's technologies afford many alternatives for assisting the low vision patient. Our patients have many different devices to choose from in aiding their low vision. From inexpensive magnifiers to high-tech glasses, there is something to help every patient.

The following is a listing of some of today's low vision devices and household aids:

- Hand-held magnifiers
- Talking clocks
- Talking computers
- Large-print publications and books
- Raised markings on stoves
- Special lighting
- Special sewing needles
- Video magnifiers
- Telescopic lenses, microscopic lenses
- Computer-assisted glasses



It is important to talk with your eye care professional about your vision problems. Every case is different – what may help your neighbor may not be what is appropriate for your vision challenge. Taking charge of your condition will help you and your eye care practitioner develop the best vision restoration plan for you.

JOHN'S STORY: A HAPPY GRANDFATHER

John Balogh, a retired grandfather, has optic neuritis in both eyes, causing permanent loss of his central vision. His optic neuritis, caused by multiple sclerosis, caused him to go on disability. In fact, because of his MS he was forced to retire “kicking and screaming,” as he says.

There currently is no treatment and no way to restore his vision loss. Although blessed with the freedom of time and the proximity of his grandchildren, John was, nevertheless, unable to do one thing he had planned on in his retirement – spend time with his grandchildren by reading to them. Fortunately for him – and them – John was prescribed the new JORDY (Joint Optical Reflective Display), a second-generation high-tech, head-mounted device.

John's story unfolded before some eight million Americans as he and his grandchildren were featured, along with the JORDY, on ABC's “Good Morning America” in summer 2001. While cameras rolled, he read to his grandchildren with the new JORDY.



This low vision device magnifies 25 times for distance viewing and 50 times for close-up viewing. Portable and lightweight, the JORDY is self-focusing and can provide color or black-and-white imaging. The new device also has an image locator, with which the viewer can locate objects in space that were previously hard to find because of the ultra-high magnification. The new JORDY can find an object, then zoom out to get a wide-angle view, such as locking in on a speaker and then zooming out to see the larger room.

The new JORDY will enable visually impaired persons to more easily have access to reading, sewing, paying their bills, playing cards or games, working at their computers and recognizing loved ones. The JORDY is not, however, designed for driving or walking.

For John, this device brings a new freedom to do the things he loves.



REGAINING INDEPENDENCE

Mary Gellerstedt has always been independent, fun-loving and high-spirited. Her happy attitude and good outlook have taken her far. An active community member, Mary was president of the Atlanta Symphony Board, among other community leadership activities. But just a few years ago, like her mother, Mary found herself with decreased vision due to age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Forced to stay at home more and more because she couldn't drive, Mary found herself limited socially and in her mobility. When she came to the Emory Eye Center, she was told, for the first time, that there were devices to help her regain vision. "No one had ever told me that anything could help," she says emphatically. A telescopic lens enabled her to again give speeches. And later, the new JORDY (Joint Optical Reflective Display) allowed her even more flexibility and mobility in her reading. She says about her low vision devices, "This was the greatest gift in the world!" Noting that those getting low vision devices must take the time to learn to use them, Mary says that they have enabled her to stay active and mobile. Having been in the public eye of Atlanta for her entire adult life, Mary is able to continue her vital role in the community with just a few modifications.





A YOUNG ADVOCATE FOR LOW VISION HELP

Kim Cain is an active young mother of two. While pregnant with her first child she found out that she had Stargardt's disease, a disabling deterioration of the macula. Kim credits the Emory Eye Center's Low Vision Clinic with enabling her to lead a normal life as a wife and mother of two active children. Kim has special glasses – bioptic lenses – that allow her to function much the same as all other young adults. She even drives, after taking a special course using her low vision device, which uses a bioptic telescope to allow her to see the traffic signs. Today, Kim is a strong and vocal advocate for the visually impaired. She is thankful and says that bioptics and the ability to live her life the way she wants is “fantastic!”

OVERCOMING DARKNESS

Dr. Ted Hersh, who retired from Emory University School of Medicine and The Emory Clinic a few years ago, will tell you that his low vision device has made a profound difference in his life. As former co-director of the Division of Gastroenterology and head of the Human Investigations Committee at Emory, he was accustomed to providing a high level of care for his patients. Today, Emory's Low Vision Clinic has provided him a high level of care for his vision disadvantage.

Because he has lost his peripheral vision and developed night blindness due to retinitis pigmentosa, Dr. Hersh has had trouble negotiating dimly lit spaces, in particular those at an airport and in a darkened restaurant. When he was given the Betacom VisAble VideoTelescope™, he entered a new world, where he could locate a table in darkened restaurants and find his way through airports. As he says, "The beauty of this device is that you can zoom in on what you need to see and even have the option of adding light to that dark object or person and make them visible and even clearer."

These days, with nine grandchildren to enjoy, Dr. Hersh says that his device allows him to watch his grandchildren's birthday parties, even in the darkened space of a bowling alley. "I can zoom in on the children, the cake, the candles, and see all the festivities. I don't miss a thing now," he says smiling.





A GRATEFUL YOUNG MOTHER WHO LOVES THE CARPOOL LANE

Christi Kasha always wanted to be a “mom,” as she says. In fact, her fondest wish was to drive the children she thought she might someday have to their various activities.

When Christi was just 25 years old, she began noticing a vision problem, especially when driving. Traffic signal turn arrows and some road signs were a problem. She later found out that an unknown virus had attacked part of her optic nerve, which left Christi with blurry central vision. She could no longer drive with ease. In fact, Christi gave up driving for several years. That was unfortunate for a person who was in sales work at the time and had family across town.

During that time, her fondest wish became “please let me see well enough to drive again!” With help at Emory’s Low Vision Clinic, she did just that. Now, with two young children to care for, she says with obvious glee, “I’m the happiest mother sitting in the carpool lane! I’m just so grateful to be there and be able to drive my children around.”

Christi uses the Ocutech VES Bioptic glasses, which enable her to focus on objects in front of her while driving. In order to be able to drive again, Christi had to learn to use the glasses and then had to pass special driving tests to qualify for her license. Christi says that although it may take time to learn to use the special glasses, having this device can dramatically change one’s life for the better.

YOU AND EMORY'S LOW VISION CLINIC: YOU CAN HELP

A top-ten nationally-ranked eye center, Emory Eye Center boasts respected faculty, is a regional referral center and has ground-breaking researchers. Every day we forge new solutions to low vision problems.

How can you help?

You can become a member of our team and support our research as we develop new ideas and technologies that can restore vision to people who cannot see to read, prepare a meal, drive a car or recognize a loved one's face.

For more information about how you can contribute to this important work, please contact:

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EMORY EYE CENTER

The Emory Eye Center and its modern clinical and laboratory facilities opened in its present building in 1984, offering superior services to patients with eye disorders that required the advanced care and expertise of ophthalmic specialists and sub-specialists.

Eye Center physicians are members of The Emory Clinic and faculty members within the Emory University School of Medicine's Department of Ophthalmology, which has held a reputation for outstanding clinical care for eye disorders for more than a century. Eye Center faculty members are nationally recognized for excellence within their subspecialty fields.

Clinical services in the Eye Center include vitreoretinal disease, glaucoma, neuro-ophthalmology, cornea and external disease, refractive surgery, oculoplastics, pediatric ophthalmology, comprehensive ophthalmology, an optical science laboratory (glasses), a contact lens clinic, a low vision clinic, and an ocular pathology laboratory. Diagnostic services of ultrasonography, electrophysiology, ocular photography, and visual field testing also are offered.

Patient care is supported by strong programs in basic science and clinical research. An entire floor within the Eye Center is devoted to laboratory research.

In addition, the Eye Center supports one of the nation's leading training programs for residents and fellows.

To contact an Eye Center physician, call 404-778-2020.