

Factsheet

Wearing spectacles with dementia

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Vision UK Learning Disability, Dementia & Sight Loss Committee

1. Introduction

This factsheet will be useful for people with dementia, their families, carers and professionals. There are other factsheets about 'Cataracts and dementia', 'Dementia and low vision' and 'Eye examinations for people with dementia'.

Lots of people need to wear spectacles (specs) to make their sight better. When you have dementia, it is important to wear any spec you need.

2. Wearing spectacles

Many everyday tasks are easier when you are wearing your spec:

- Reading
- Watching television
- Getting out and about
- Preparing food
- Eating
- Socialising
- Taking medication

If you have dementia and need to wear specs you, and anyone that cares for you, need to know when you should wear your specs. This could be your friends and family or your carers. If you have a care plan, then it should include when you need to wear your specs and which specs should be worn for different tasks.

Taking photographs of you wearing your specs can help remind you and your carers that you should be wearing them. These photographs could be in your room, or in your care plan or on your specs case. If you need different specs for different activities, then the pictures could be of you in your different specs doing the activity you need them for.

Take your specs with you if you go into hospital or stay with a friend to make sure you can see properly while you are away from home.

3. Why you may need to wear spectacles

Having an eye examination with an optometrist will make sure that you have the correct specs. Everyone should have their sight tested at least once every two years, or once every year if you are 70 years old or older. An optometrist (optician) will be able to tell you how often you need to have your eyes tested. If you have dementia it is possible for the optometrist to adjust the eye examination so they can prescribe and update any specs you may need.

4. Choosing your spectacles

Wearing the right specs for the right task is important. If you mix up your specs you will not see so well. The dispensing optician will advise on the right frames and lenses for you and will fit them properly for you when you collect them. He or she will also advise when you should wear them. Some specs should be worn all the time whilst others are used for long distance or close up. The dispensing optician will also advise you about:

- labelling your specs and case with your name and when to use them, for example 'Alan's TV specs'.
- matching the colours of the specs and the case.
- attaching a chain or cord to your specs so you can wear them around your neck and do not lose them.
- keeping your specs clean, dirty lenses can make it harder to see well.
- checking your specs regularly to make sure they are fitting comfortably and are not scratched or damaged. Your optician will be able to adjust and repair them for you.

5. Useful contact

Association of British Dispensing Opticians

199 Gloucester Terrace

London

W2 6LD

Tel: 020 7298 5100

Email: general@abdolondon.org.uk

Web: www.abdo.org.uk/

6. About the Vision UK Learning Disability, Dementia & Sight Loss Committee

The information in this fact sheet was produced by the Learning Disability, Dementia & Sight Loss (LD, DaSL) Committee. The committee was formed to promote better understanding of the issues facing people affected by learning disability and autism, dementia and sight loss. It also seeks to develop and disseminate materials resources and tools that contribute to good practice.

Visit www.visionuk.org.uk to find out more.

7. Glossary of terms

Optometrists or ophthalmic opticians

Optometrists or ophthalmic/dispensing opticians (often called opticians) usually work in high street practices or shops, or hospital eye departments.

They are qualified to test sight, prescribe glasses and detect eye conditions. They can also refer you, if necessary, to your GP (family doctor) who may in turn refer you onto a hospital.

Most optometrists are not qualified to diagnose, treat or operate on your eyes, although they will often discuss your eye condition with you. They can also provide advice on looking after your eyes and may help you with your low vision aids.