

## Tips for Caregivers

AMD affects the individual diagnosed with the disease, but also impacts family and friends. Loved ones must find the balance between offering useful assistance and taking away independence.

A simple conversation shows that you are interested in his or her well-being and that you truly care. Your family member may have a lot of questions about AMD, different treatment options, and what to expect. While no one knows for sure what the future holds, honestly talking about fears may be an important step to accepting reality.



It is essential to talk to your loved one about frustrations. You may believe he is depressed about no longer driving, but his real fear is that he cannot write checks or read his bank statements. She may believe AMD will result in

complete blindness. You can offer your observations, but listen to what is important to your family member and look for solutions to these challenges first.

Ask your doctor for a referral or find local **Mobility and Orientation** specialists who can teach skills to manage the environment independently.

These experts offer tips and training on how to make many common activities easier for those with low vision.

In addition to encouraging Mobility and Orientation training, caregivers can help make it easier to function around the house:

1. Remove hazards and clutter. Make sure there are no cables or wires on the floor that may cause a fall. Low furniture, like foot stools, should be placed out of traffic areas. Scatter rugs are also a tripping hazard and should be removed, especially if mobility is a problem.
2. Be sensitive and do not rearrange furniture or move objects without telling the person.
3. Reading labels on boxes or cans of food can be a problem. Make sure your loved one has the pantry and kitchen organized so that there are no surprises. Putting raised dots on the stove or microwave may be helpful to assure appliances are turned on and off safely.
4. It is also important to develop a safe, effective system for organizing medications, which are small and often difficult to handle. One way you can help is to mark bottles with large easy to read labels, or put colored tabs to distinguish different drops or pills. Refilling a weekly pill reminder box for your loved one may be a big help.



5. If your loved one has beloved pieces of clothing but buttons and snaps are difficult to manage, consider replacing closures with Velcro.
6. Make sure there is adequate lighting in areas where your loved one sits, walks, or eats.
7. Does your loved one have access to magnifiers and user-friendly computers or tablets? A low vision optometrist can offer advice on the best assistive devices.
8. Is the phone set up to easily contact emergency services and family members?
9. Find out information about local transportation services. There are often reduced fare or free shuttles available to seniors and those with low vision.
10. Are there local support groups for those with AMD or low vision? The opportunity to share frustrations and survival tips with others in a similar situation can be helpful. There also may be a support group for caregivers that you may want to attend!