there IS hope

Though lost vision cannot be restored, a combination of vision training, rehabilitation, and learning how to use low vision devices can return something almost as important—independence.

BEFORE YOU BUY...

1 SEEK PROPER CARE

Regular eye doctors may not be familiar with devices or what can be done to restore visual independence. When that's the case, ask for a referral to a low vision specialist or call our hotline at 1-800-455-8006 or visit our website at www.checkyearly.com/lowvision.

2 SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Work with a professional to set realistic goals. What's most important? Reading? Watching TV? Going to the store? Seeing the face of loved ones? Each of these tasks carries a different distance requirement, which is why device decisions are so task-specific.

3 EDUCATE YOURSELF

Check out websites such as those on p. 7 or search the Internet using keywords such as macular degeneration. And, when it comes to selecting devices for yourself or a loved one, don't confuse store-bought magnifiers, whose low price matches the quality of their optics, with high-quality prescription devices.

4 GET TRAINED

Whether you're looking at devices with an eye care professional or a local agency or eye care center, be sure they provide enough training to make the user comfortable with the new device.

The key is working in tandem with an eye care professional and/or low vision specialist as well as other professionals that may include social workers, instructors, technicians, and low vision or occupational therapists. There are many low vision devices out there that can help people regain their independence.

This is what vision rehabilitation is all about—helping patients maximize their remaining vision and develop strategies that will lead them to a more independent life style. It includes setting realistic expectations and determining which activities are the most important—and most achievable. As a result, much of the rehabilitation is very task-specific. It's not unusual for an eye care professional to ask the seemingly simple question: "What do you most want to do?"

The result is often a recommendation for more than one device. Why? Because each is designed to serve a very specific purpose. Here's a look at some of those devices.

- **CCTVs (closed-circuit TVs)** are also called video magnifiers and consist of a display (monitor) and a video camera. These units come either as a desktop or a portable device. When reading material or any other item is positioned under the camera, the user can choose from a range of magnification to enlarge and display the image on the monitor. The user can also adjust contrast, brightness, and color.

- **Glasses** include optical systems for reading and other close-up work that can carry high prescriptions, mirrors and what are called prismatic reading glasses that take advantage of remaining vision and allow the wearer to view binocularly under high magnification. New technology allows some lenses to be surprisingly thin, so that the image of coke-bottle lenses doesn't always hold true anymore.

- **Eyeglass Lenses** that offer glare control can dramatically increase visual comfort. The eye care professional may discuss options that include: specially tinted glare control lenses that are designed to filter out specific wavelengths; photochromics, which lighten indoors and darken outdoors; sunglasses or clip-ons; fit-over style sunglasses or glare control filters that may include side shields to maximize coverage; and anti-reflective lenses to help eliminate reflections.

Increasing visual independence is what vision rehabilitation is all about.

- **Magnifiers** come in a variety of sizes and designs. Some are hand-held, others are on a stand—some of which are height-adjustable—so reading material can be placed underneath, while more portable styles hang around the neck. Still others are illuminated, providing additional light to the area being viewed. Yet another design—using digital magnification—features an electronic pair of glasses with its own displays to help the user read print and view distance. Portability is also key in the design of hand-held electronic magnifiers that carry a camera (think miniature video magnifier) for scanning and magnifying images, even the rounded labels on cans at the store or pills in the medicine cabinet. Some can also digitally manipulate the images.

- **Telescopes** can be designed to help at a variety of distances. Consisting of several lenses for each system, they can be monocular (for one eye) or binocular (for both eyes). Some are hand-held, while many designs feature the telescopes mounted onto eyeglasses. Among the newest advances are head-worn systems for distance viewing that come with a portable control unit and battery pack.

- **Non-Optical Aids** can also make a big difference. They include such items as large-print or talking clocks, color-coded containers, and check-writing guides, as well as talking books and large-print publications (see p. 7 for more info).

LOW VISION DEVICES HELP PEOPLE...

{Gain independence}

{Recognize faces}

{Resume hobbies}

{See up close}

{Keep in touch}

{Enjoy activities}