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Managing sight loss: advice for everyday living

Fact sheet 2a: Getting out and about

May 2019



Getting out and about – what you need to know

As a person with a sight loss you may need to develop new strategies for doing things you have always done safely. The following notes are for general guidance and may be helpful to you.

- The first time you go to an unfamiliar area, have someone go with you. Make mental or written notes about landmarks you can use to guide you on future trips.
- Plan your routes carefully. Choose routes that present the fewest number of obstacles, dangerous crossings or complex directions. Study a map or chart (perhaps with a magnifier) and plan before you start out so you will remain orientated. Be aware of possible landmarks along your route. If you feel a bit insecure about a trip, plan to travel during daylight, when there is less congestion, or with a companion.
- Use road crossings wherever possible. Do not try to short-cut.
- Save yourself frustration; ask people for directions.
- Look for railings to use when going up or down stairs and steps.
- A Sensory Services Team Rehabilitation Officer for Vision Impairment (ROVI) can advise on using a white cane to judge edges, steps, barriers, keep your balance and alert drivers and public transport providers to sight loss. Even people with small vision loss can find canes useful.

- If your sight seems better at certain times of day, plan shopping or more complicated travel for that time.
- Marking your own steps, keyholes, doors, knobs and landmarks with white paint or orange bump-ons (tactile markers that you can feel) may be helpful.
- In a group of people or an unfamiliar setting, ask someone to give you a verbal tour in order to orientate you to whom and what is in the room.
- For more information, guidance or if you feel at all nervous contact your local Adults' Health and Care or Children's Services Sensory Services Team. Loss of confidence can occur very quickly if being out of doors is hazardous to you. It is easier to maintain confidence by being shown what skills might help earlier rather than when confidence is already lost.

