



# Your guide to safe living

SmartSight is produced by Bayer as a service to patients. Bayer would like to thank The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and the Macular Society for reviewing.



Tailored support for people with impaired vision

## Safe living starts here

This guide has been designed to help you with many aspects of day-to-day living. We understand the practical and emotional challenges you may have to face, and this booklet is here to help. Inside you'll find useful, realistic information on how to stay safe at home and elsewhere so you can make the most of your everyday life.



## Staying safe starts with your overall health

If you're worried about slips, trips or falls and want to know how to avoid them, this booklet gives you some guidance on looking after your general health and wellbeing.

### **Build up your bones**

If you have osteoporosis (meaning your bones are not as strong as they used to be) you could be more likely to break or fracture a bone if you fall. To help keep your bones strong, ensure you eat plenty of calcium-rich foods (such as dairy products), get enough vitamin D from sunshine, or take calcium and vitamin D supplements.

For more information about vitamin supplements and safe sun exposure, talk to your doctor.

### **Stay active**

Regular activity and exercise will help to strengthen your muscles and improve your balance. For overall good health, try to be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day, five times a week. Try exercises that make you stronger and improve your balance, like walking, gardening and swimming, and even some sports, for example bowls or golf.

The RNIB and Macular Society offer practical advice and support as well as providing links to forums so you can share your experiences with other people in the same position as you. To find out how best to keep yourself healthy and active, you can also get in touch with other support organisations using the details listed at the back of this booklet.



# Staying safe at home

To help you stay comfortable and safe at home, here are a few things you can think about:

## Stumbling blocks

- If you have trouble seeing details at low contrast levels, furniture can become a problem. Try making it stand out, for example by:
  - placing dark chairs or tables in front of a pale wall
  - putting low-level furniture like coffee tables into corners
  - using contrasting colours on doorframes and skirting boards
  - making sure that bedclothes' colours/patterns contrast with bedroom flooring
- Reduce the number of long electrical cords you have in any room, and tape loose cords to the skirting boards
- Use screw-on draught excluders on the bottom of your doors, rather than loose ones
- Highlight any uneven floor levels with coloured paint or tape
- Try not to walk around in socks – wear shoes or slippers with a non-slip sole
- Keep floors tidy and don't leave things lying around (for example, shoes)
- To avoid accidents, remind anyone in the house not to move furniture without telling you

## Lighting

- Good lighting is crucial, so try to keep your home well lit throughout. Installing extra lighting in entrances, hallways, and at the top and bottom of each staircase can help reduce shadows
- It might be useful to install two-way light switches on stairs and in corridors or rooms where you have more than one doorway
- During the day you can reduce glare with blinds or sheer window coverings to control direct sunlight
- At night, leave the lights on in passageways and other places where you may walk, or use nightlights to illuminate your path between rooms
- Make sure you have a light within easy reach of your bed
- Aim to create even lighting throughout your home to avoid shadows or dark areas - diffusers on ceiling lights can help achieve this
- Use directional task lighting for close-up activities such as eating or reading

# Staying safe at home

## Flooring

- Try and keep your floors clear of clutter. For instance, don't put fans, heaters or low tables in the middle of rooms or in places like passageways where you regularly walk
- Don't polish floors – instead, cover them with special non-slip rugs or matting
- Loose rugs or mats should be removed or secured, either by fixing them to the floor or using special non-slip backing

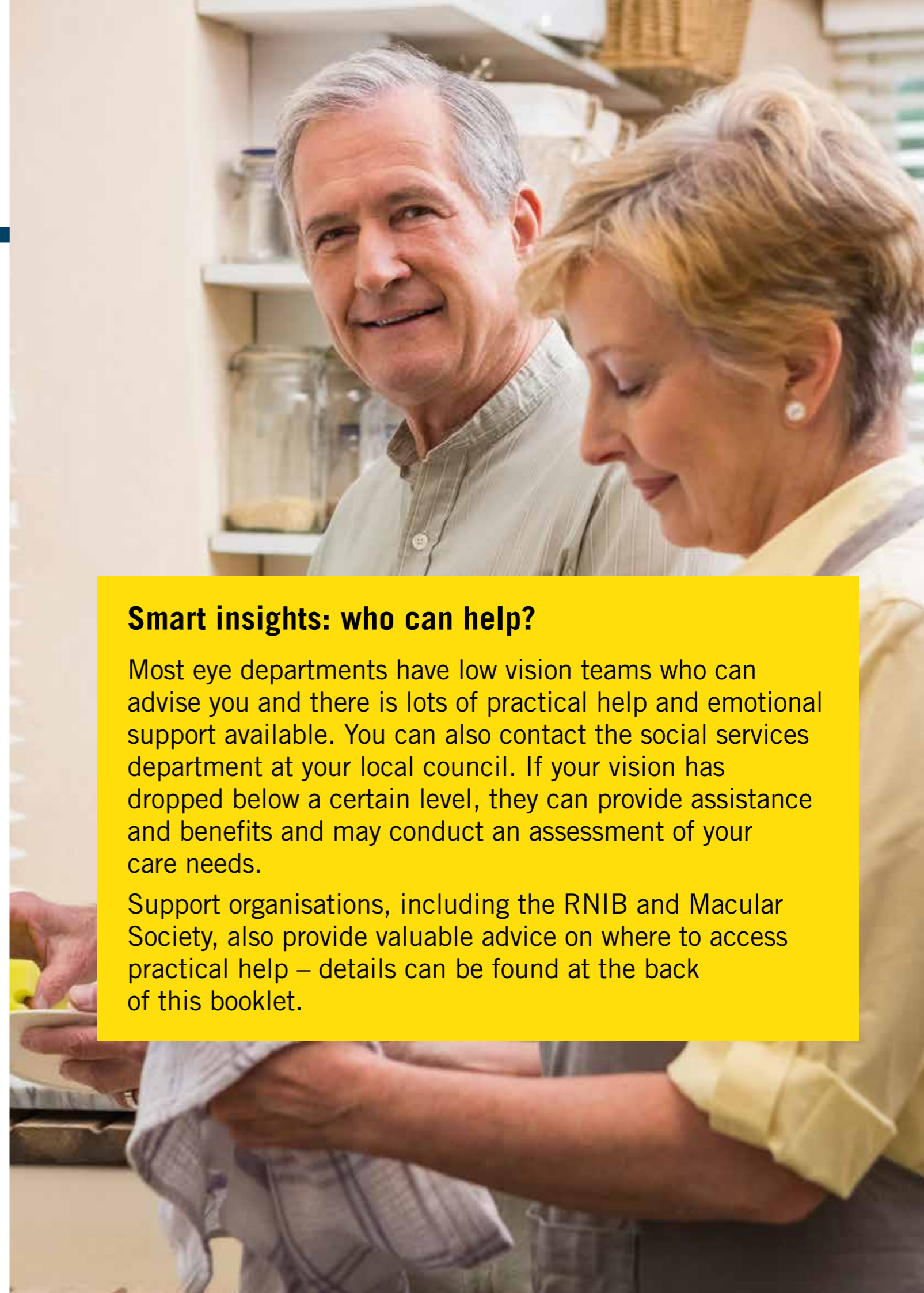
## In the kitchen

- Try to store knives in a knife block or cover the blades if you keep them in a drawer
- You can get brightly coloured, raised, marking dots for the hob, oven and microwave controls so that you can feel them and adjust them more easily by touch
- Try using crockery that contrasts with your tablecloth to minimise food and drink spills, for example, white plates on a dark tablecloth
- Mark the edges of cabinets and drawers with brightly coloured tape
- Mop up spills as soon as they happen to avoid slipping

## Smart insights: who can help?

Most eye departments have low vision teams who can advise you and there is lots of practical help and emotional support available. You can also contact the social services department at your local council. If your vision has dropped below a certain level, they can provide assistance and benefits and may conduct an assessment of your care needs.

Support organisations, including the RNIB and Macular Society, also provide valuable advice on where to access practical help – details can be found at the back of this booklet.





# Staying safe at home

## In the bathroom

- Talcum powder and liquids on tiles, vinyl or wooden floors can make them very slippery, so clean up any spills straight away
- Try to put a contrasting, non-slip mat in the shower or bath as well as one on the floor
- If you need grab rails beside the toilet or in the shower or bath, wrap them with non-slip tape in a contrasting colour to make them more visible
- When adjusting water temperature, first turn on the cold water before slowly adding the hot water, until you reach a comfortable temperature

## On the stairs

- Mark the edge of the first and last steps with bright paint or light-reflecting tape contrasting with the colour of the flooring
- Consider covering the areas at the top and bottom of the staircase with carpet or non-slip material and use non-slip treads on stairs
- Place something tactile, like a rubber band, on the handrail at the top and bottom so you know where the staircase starts and ends
- Think about installing a stair-lift if you have particularly steep stairs or your house has several storeys

## In the garden

- Get outdoor paths checked for cracks and uneven areas – keep them clear of moss, slime and fallen leaves
- Make sure your outside doormats have sloping edges
- Put hoses and gardening tools away after you've used them
- Make sure you wear appropriate outdoor footwear





# Staying safe when out and about

Here are a few things to bear in mind when you are outside:

## Stumbling blocks

- In the great outdoors, things like poor lighting, uneven pavements and broken, loose or wet footpaths can easily trip you up
- Give yourself plenty of time to get where you're going, so you don't have to rush
- Stay vigilant – look out for unsafe surfaces, cyclists, and any obstacles or people in your path

## Lighting

- Avoid sudden changes in light. If you go from light to dark, or vice versa, stop to give your eyes time to adjust before moving on
- If you suffer from glare outdoors, seek advice from your low vision practitioner who can recommend appropriate sunglasses that improve contrast and make it easier to see potential hazards
- Wearing a wide-brimmed hat or visor can minimise glare and sudden changes in light and protect you from overhanging branches

## Footwear

- Wear firm-fitting shoes with rounded, low, broad heels, and a patterned, slip-resistant tread on the soles
- Make sure you wear the right footwear – for example, don't go outside in your slippers



### Smart insights: who can help?

The RNIB can advise you and your family, friends or carers how to access appropriate help. Your local social services should also have a specialist unit, often called a Sensory Needs Rehabilitation or Sensory Impairment Team, who provide home assessments and orientation and mobility training to help you move around safely.

# Tools to help you move around safely

If you feel you need a bit more help, there are many devices, such as canes and electronic travel aids, available to help you stay safe while you're on the move. Some patient associations can provide these items and Sensory Needs Rehabilitation teams can give training on how to use them.

## Canes

Although you may never need a cane, many people say it gives them more confidence. If you do decide to try one, arrange an assessment to find what's best suited to your needs, because there are several different types you can choose from.

## Travel aids

There are various aids that can help you when you're out and about, including discreet hand-held sonar aids that vibrate or buzz to warn you of nearby obstacles, and GPS devices which can give you verbal directions to your destination. Your healthcare team will be able to advise you about these.

## Vision aids

You may find magnification devices helpful. These should be prescribed by a low vision practitioner who can assess your requirements. These consultations are usually free on the NHS and so is the long-term loan of devices. You may want to carry a magnifying glass to help you read product labels in shops or public transport timetables. A small pair of binoculars may also be useful.

# Orientation and mobility

- Give yourself plenty of time to travel and don't rush
- Choose well-lit areas and avoid potentially dangerous routes
- Look for landmarks
- Watch for stairs, steps, and changes in level
- Use lifts or escalators where available instead of stairs; if you have to use stairs, hold on to the railings

## Smart insights: who can help?

Ask your eye care professional about vision aids that can help you get around safely and carry on with daily life.

The RNIB and Macular Society can also help. They both provide a range of information resources, including practical assistance and emotional support services, as well as links to companies that supply visual/walking aids and free helplines which you can use to find out more about safe living.



# Taking medicines

As you get older, you might find that you have many medicines to take each day. Keeping track of them is important, so here are some ideas to help you take your medicines properly:

## Organisation is key

- ✓ Throw away any outdated medicines and ones you no longer use
- ✓ Keep a record of all your current medicines. Write a list in large print or make a voice recording of important information about each medicine, including dosage, when to take it, and possible side effects. Include vitamin supplements and over-the-counter medicines
- ✓ Store unused or extra packs of medicines in a safe place and make a note of where they are
- ✓ If you have medicines that you don't need every day, keep them separate from those you do take every day
- ✓ Speak to your pharmacist about dispensing medicines in dosette boxes for easier tracking
- ✓ If you have diabetes, your specialist nurse can help you with your glucose meter or insulin pump to keep on top of your condition
- ✓ If you use eye drops, speak to your nurse at the hospital to make sure you know how and when to apply them



## Labelling may help

- ✓ Use rubber bands to keep track of your daily medicine doses. For example, use three bands if you take a tablet three times a day, and remove one band each time you take a tablet. At the end of the day, replace the three bands, so you're ready for the next day
- ✓ Use a pill organiser. You may be able to find one marked in large letters or Braille
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist to place a large-print label on your medicine container. You can also request large-print instructions and different-sized bottles or containers for each medicine

## Smart insights: who can help?

Ask your pharmacist for advice on storing and using medicines safely.



# Staying safe in an emergency

What happens if you have an emergency and need help? Although it may never happen, it's still a good idea to plan ahead and have a strategy in place so you know you have every eventuality covered. It can also be reassuring for your family and friends to know you are prepared – and you could involve them in your emergency plans so they know how they can help.

## Calling for help

- Make a list of people or organisations to call in case of an emergency
- Keep this list handy, for example in your wallet, on the fridge or next to the phone at home



## Raising the alarm

- There are many devices you can use to raise the alarm in an emergency, including your home phone and/or mobile phone
- Some people have a 24-hour monitored response service or personal alarm
- You can also carry anything that makes a noise, such as a whistle, bell or battery-operated alarm
- If you live alone, consider asking someone to call and check on you at the same time every day. Patient organisations, charities and Social Services may offer daily call services

## Getting help

- Leave a spare house key with a friend, neighbour or relative who lives nearby, or in a box outside with a combination lock, so that those who need to reach you can access your home in an emergency

### Smart insights: who can help?

If you'd like to find out more about on-call monitored help services, look for 'personal alarms' in the phone book or online.

# Your SmartSight safety checklist

## Staying safe at home

- ✓ Use contrasting colours or textures to make potential hazards stand out
- ✓ Make sure your home is well lit throughout
- ✓ Minimise the risk of slipping by ensuring your carpets/rugs aren't loose and floors aren't highly polished
- ✓ Tidy away electricity cables and remove clutter from the floor
- ✓ Mark the edge of stairs with contrasting tape and, if needed, install handrails on stairs and in the bathroom
- ✓ Keep all emergency numbers handy and close to the phone

## Staying safe on your feet

- ✓ Wear low shoes with slip-resistant soles
- ✓ Stay active to help build muscle strength and stability
- ✓ Consider orientation and mobility training
- ✓ Always carry a personal alarm or phone with you
- ✓ Use vision and living aids to make everyday life easier

## Playing it safe with your eyesight

- ✓ Schedule regular eye tests with your eye care professional
- ✓ If you think your eyesight may be getting worse, contact your healthcare professional



# Useful resources

## The Macular Society

Telephone: 0300 3030 111

Address: The Macular Society,  
PO Box 1870, Andover SP10 9AD

Email: [info@macularsociety.org](mailto:info@macularsociety.org)

Website: [www.macularsociety.org](http://www.macularsociety.org)

## RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Address: RNIB Headquarters,  
105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

Email: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## Age UK

Telephone: 0800 169 6565

Address: Tavis House,  
1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA

Email (via web form):  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.ageuk.co.uk](http://www.ageuk.co.uk)



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If you have questions regarding your eye health and possible treatment options, please contact your doctor.

For further information, please contact Bayer Medical Information at: Bayer plc, 400 South Oak Way, Green Park, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 6AD. Tel: 0118 206 3000. For any medical information requests, please contact us at: [medical.information@bayer.co.uk](mailto:medical.information@bayer.co.uk).

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