

What is low vision optometry and what is low vision rehabilitation?

-Low Vision Optometry-

Low vision optometrists examine patients with severe vision loss, vision that cannot be corrected by traditional clinical means. Patients are usually referred by their optometrist, ophthalmologist or family physician.

Low vision optometry is a process of examination, determination of functional vision, and coordination between the optometrist and other low vision professionals including ophthalmologists, low vision therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, occupational therapists and teachers of the visually impaired.

The goals of low vision optometric care are:

- To evaluate the functional status of the eye and visual system
- To assess ocular health and related systemic health conditions and the impact of disease or abnormal conditions on visual functioning
- To provide appropriate optometric rehabilitation intervention to improve the patient's visual functioning
- To counsel and educate patients regarding their visual impairment, including recommendations for treatment, management and future care
- To provide appropriate referral for services which are outside the expertise of the optometric low vision practitioner

Your appointment and low vision examination can last between one and two hours. The examination may include a visual acuity test, refraction test, ocular motility and binocular vision assessment, visual field assessment and/or an ocular health assessment. Additional testing beyond this may be necessary depending on your vision problems.

During your low vision examination, your low vision eye doctor will ask you for your medical and eye health history in addition to discussing your functional vision problems. Be prepared to discuss how your vision loss is impacting your daily activities. This may

include problems with reading, watching TV, mobility, playing cards, sewing, knitting, woodworking, or other social and recreational activities. Think about the things that you would like to see and do better. Visual impairments can result in significantly lowered vision, affecting a person's ability to complete simple daily tasks such as reading, driving or finances.

Because of the decreased ability to carry out activities of daily living, your low vision eye doctor may refer you for low vision rehabilitation.

-Low Vision Rehabilitation-

Low vision rehabilitation is a collaborative, multidisciplinary process involving a low vision optometrist or ophthalmologist and a team of other low vision professionals including vision rehabilitation therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, occupational therapists and teachers of the visually impaired. The goal is to provide patients with maximum functionality through treatment and education. This increases independence and confidence, resulting in a higher quality of life. A low vision rehabilitation plan is individualized to meet each patient's needs through clinical treatments and training in activities of daily living.

Because many causes of low vision cannot be cured or treated clinically, low vision rehabilitation is necessary to train patients how to correctly use optical devices and other adaptive strategies to make the most of their remaining eyesight.

If you or someone you love is experiencing vision loss, don't wait to get help. Early intervention through low vision optometry and low vision rehabilitation is the key to ensuring that vision loss doesn't result in the loss of independence.