

Caring for Someone With Diabetic Macular Edema (DME)

If you are helping to support someone who has been diagnosed with DME, small, easy changes can make a difference. Here are some things you can do to help your loved one manage his or her limited vision.

- **Control light, colors, and glare.** Make sure there is a light in every room. Use adjustable lamps for direct light, and use nightlights to help light darker areas. Also, use contrasting colors around the house. For example, paint doorframes and staircase railings a different color from the walls, such as black and white or yellow and green. Make sure your furniture and appliances are in places that are permanent and familiar so your loved one can get around without bumping into things^{1,2}
- **Organize the house.** Keeping items in the same place can help a person with low vision find them each time they are needed. For example, in the kitchen, keep plates on the same shelf, utensils in the same easy-to-reach drawers, milk and produce in the same place in the refrigerator when they are taken out and put back in. In the bedroom, hang clothes by color (all black together, all whites together) and use different-colored hangers to help differentiate pants from tops. In the bathroom, use bright stickers or neon Post-It® notes to identify different bottles and containers^{1,2}
- **Remove items that may cause accidents.** These include throw rugs that aren't securely fastened, toys and shoes left on the floor in unexpected places, power cords and extension cords that snake around the floor, and countertop appliances with hard-to-read on-and-off switches²
- **Manage medicines.** It's important that your loved one takes his or her prescription medicines. If your loved one's vision is poor, it might be hard to read the labels. To make sure your loved one is taking the right medicine at the right time when you aren't around, you can wrap a different-colored rubber band around each bottle or mark each bottle with a bright marker. For example, blue can mean one medication and orange can be another medication. You can also ask your pharmacy to use large-print labels^{1,2}
- **Try vision aids.** Simple objects, such as magnifying glasses, computers with bigger font sizes, sound alerts for smart phones, and better lighting may help with everyday tasks¹

Fixing up the house and managing medicines are only part of the story. Make sure you help your loved one take care of managing his or her diabetes, too.

- Help your loved one control blood sugar and blood pressure through diet and exercise³
- Make sure your loved one takes his or her blood pressure and diabetes medicines as prescribed by the doctor



Need help? Contact a low-vision specialist. These healthcare professionals can help you make the lifestyle changes your loved one needs. Check with your case manager to see if low-vision specialists are recommended by your doctor's office

Care for the Caregiver

How does your loved one's diabetic macular edema (DME) affect you? Making adjustments to your home, driving your loved one to doctor appointments, and running a lot of the errands you once shared or your loved one did by him- or herself, can feel a bit overwhelming.

Check out this list of suggestions to help take care of yourself so you can better help your loved one with DME:

- **Get enough sleep.** No one can function well when they haven't had a good night's sleep
- **Be on the lookout for any signs of physical and emotional stress.** Are you feeling very tired? Experiencing lower back or neck pain? Are you gaining or losing too much weight? Are you worrying too much or feeling overwhelmed and alone? If any of these symptoms sound familiar, talk to your healthcare professional
- **Help reduce stress with meditation, yoga, or massage.** Some health plans offer discounts for these services. And who knows? You might discover a relaxing activity that you can do with your loved one, too
- **Ask for help.** You are not alone. Good friends and family are happy to do something for you if it will make you feel better. They are concerned about you, too. Maybe they can help with food shopping. Walking the dog. Going to the dry cleaner. These little things might not seem like a big deal to them, but it means a lot to you to have someone else give you a much-needed break
- **Don't neglect your own health.** It's easy to cancel a doctor or dentist appointment when you are busy taking care of someone else. Make sure you are keeping your appointments and taking any medicines that have been prescribed to you. Don't let being a caregiver be an excuse!
- **Make some "me" time.** It doesn't have to be a big night. You can go to a movie. Visit a friend. Watch TV. Read a book. Even simply take a nap! Something that is just for you and you alone



REMEMBER:

You can't take care of anyone else if you don't take care of yourself first.

Learn more at DiabetesSightRisk.com.

References: **1.** Low vision aids and low vision rehabilitation. American Academy of Ophthalmology (EyeSmart) website. <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/low-vision-aids-rehabilitation.cfm>. Accessed March 5, 2015. **2.** Tips for living life to its fullest: living with low vision. American Occupational Therapy Association website. <http://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Adults/LowVision/Low%20Vision%20Tip%20Sheet.ashx>. Accessed March 5, 2015. **3.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing diabetes. <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/prevention.html>. Accessed March 5, 2015.

For additional resources,
contact your case manager.



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US-PMA-1058