

Vision and Hearing

Our eyes, ears, and brain work as a team. As we age, vision and hearing change.

Studies show that improved vision and hearing helps to keep the brain sharp.

- The brain receives much of its information from the eyes and ears
- To understand, learn, remember, and use information well, we must first SEE or HEAR the information well
 - If the information we see or hear is not clear, the brain cannot do its job as well and has to work harder
 - When we have to concentrate extra hard to read printed information or hear what people are saying, it is harder to understand what this information means

Eyes

- Even with reading glasses, we need 2 to 3 times more **light** to see and read as when we were in our 20's
- We need more **contrast** to see things well (such as curbs, stairs, print)
- **Color vision** changes so that light, pastel colors are harder to see and tell apart – this is the case especially with blue, green and violet colors
- Our **peripheral vision** is less sensitive, making it harder to find things we are looking for and to notice obstacles when we walk or drive

Ears

- People sound **unclear**, muffled or like they are mumbling – this makes it harder to hear what people are saying
- Listening is especially hard if there is background noise, we cannot see the talker's face, the person speaks fast, or the person has a high-pitched voice

What you can do to make sure your vision and hearing are at their best:

- Keep routine eye doctor and audiologist visits
- Optimize lighting, mark curbs and stairs, and use bright contrasting colors for key information
- Ask for print that is larger, darker, and on a white background
- Reduce background noise when possible, or ask to move to a quieter place
- Request that talkers face you, and speak more slowly and clearly
- Confirm you have heard and understood key information correctly

For more information about Vision and Eye Clinic Services in VA visit:

https://www.va.gov/OPTOMETRY/Patient_Education_Information_and_Handouts.asp

For more information about Hearing and Audiology Services in VA visit:

<https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/factsheet/Audiology-FactSheet.pdf>



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January 2019