



Empowering Children. Supporting Families. Building Brighter Futures.

Resource 042 | Vision conditions

Low vision in children

What it means

Low vision is a level of visual difficulty that is not adequately corrected by ordinary glasses, contact lenses, or standard treatment alone. It does not mean no vision. A child may have useful remaining vision and may also benefit from touch, hearing, communication, and environmental adaptations. [1]

Causes and risk factors

Causes include eye conditions affecting the retina, optic nerve, lens, or other structures, and brain-based visual impairment. Genetic, infectious, developmental, and injury-related conditions may be involved. The cause may be treatable in part even when ongoing visual support is still needed. [1,2]

General family education. A concern deserves assessment, but this guide does not diagnose a child or prescribe treatment.



Signs and everyday impact

A child may need to get close to objects, have difficulty recognizing details, navigating unfamiliar spaces, reaching accurately, or finding items in clutter. Light sensitivity or reduced visual field can occur. Behavior varies with the specific vision profile and should not be assumed to reflect cognitive delay. [1,2]

Assessment and diagnosis

A pediatric eye evaluation measures vision and eye health and investigates the cause. Functional vision assessment considers real activities, lighting, contrast, fields, and other access needs. Developmental testing should be adapted so vision demands do not hide the child's abilities. [1,2]

Treatment and therapy

Care treats the underlying condition where possible and supports access through low vision services, suitable optical or electronic aids, environmental adaptations, early intervention, and educational planning. Orientation and mobility support may help safe exploration. Tools should be selected for the child's needs and developmental stage, not purchased from general claims. [1,2,3]

Support at home

Arrange lighting, contrast, toy placement, and uncluttered spaces according to the visual profile. Announce changes, offer tactile and auditory information, and allow exploration. Coordinate with a teacher of children with visual impairment or the equivalent local service. Encourage participation with support rather than unnecessary restriction.

When to seek help

Sudden visual change, eye pain, trauma, or new neurological symptoms requires prompt assessment even when a visual impairment is already known.

Questions for your care team

- What useful vision does the child have in everyday settings?
- Which supports improve access without creating extra demands?
- How should developmental assessment and education be adapted?



Podcast preparation

Use this outline to develop a later podcast script.

Suggested opening

Welcome to Mariel Early Intervention. Today we discuss low vision in children. Low vision is a level of visual difficulty that is not adequately corrected by ordinary glasses, contact lenses, or standard treatment alone. This is general education; each child needs individualized care.

Opening: Define the topic and its developmental context.

Understanding: Explain causes and signs without inviting self-diagnosis.

Assessment: Describe evaluation and distinguish screening from diagnosis.

Support: Discuss treatment, therapy, and practical family supports.

Closing: Explain urgent signs and one clear next step.

Misconception to address: Low vision does not automatically mean limited understanding or an inability to learn visually supported skills.

Before recording: update clinical references and local service details, arrange clinical review, and use fully consented or fictional examples.

Terms in plain language

- Visual field: the area seen while looking in one direction.
- Low vision service: assessment and support for remaining vision.
- Orientation and mobility: skills for understanding spaces and moving safely.

Sources and further reading

Sources accessed 3 October 2026. Numbered references support the clinical overview. Treatment availability and referral routes vary by country.

[1] Low Vision

<https://www.nei.nih.gov/eye-health-information/eye-conditions-and-diseases/low-vision>

[2] Vision Rehabilitation

<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/vision-rehabilitation>

[3] Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI)

<https://www.nei.nih.gov/eye-health-information/eye-conditions-and-diseases/cerebral-visual-impairment-cvi>