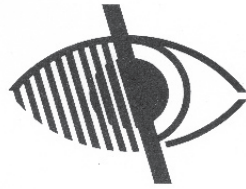


The Partially Sighted Society



Information Sheet

PROBLEMS OF GLARE



Glare is often divided into two types - Discomfort Glare and Disability Glare. Most of us experience the first type at some time in our lives. It is the need to close one eye, or cover the eyes, on a bright sunny day. We often use sunglasses to help with this and it causes us few problems apart from a little discomfort and annoyance. For many Partially Sighted individuals, especially those with conditions that affect the pre-retinal part of the eye, the problem is much worse; they experience Disability Glare. This is caused by similar light sources as with Discomfort Glare (sunlight, windows without blinds, undiffused or unshaded lamps etc) but actually results in a reduction in functional vision.

A large percentage of glare problems are caused by the blue wavelengths of light entering the eye. These come to a focus at a shorter distance to the back of the eye than the other wavelengths of light in the visible spectrum and result in scattering of light. This is particularly evident in individuals with developed Cataracts for whom the degree of light scatter is especially great. Glare is also caused by all the wavelengths of light within the

visible spectrum but to a lesser degree. People with Macular Degeneration, Retinitis Pigmentosa and Glaucoma are also prone to glare problems. Occasionally we encounter individuals with extreme Photophobia and glare problems who have conditions such as Albinism, Achromatopsia or possibly following a viral illness.

There are many ways of helping to control glare. Care should be taken to avoid redecorating in highly reflective silk and gloss finishes as these can exacerbate glare. Good, well-positioned task lighting or wall lights are preferable to bright ceiling lights, especially harsh, undiffused fluorescents. Correctly fitted blinds can help cut out glare from windows but take care with net curtains as, when dirty, these can cut out large amounts of available light and thereby reduce vision further. Some people find that a yellow coloured transparent acetate sheet helps to reduce glare from black and white print or "glossy" magazines.

When out and about, it should be remembered that the eye's ability to adapt between light and dark conditions becomes slower as we get older. This is even more evident in people with retinal problems. Many visually impaired individuals notice that when they enter a shop from a sunny street, they are "blind" for a length of time until their eyes have a chance to adapt. This problem and glare can often be helped by the wearing of special filter lenses which can be worn as wrap-around glasses over your current spectacles, as clip-ons, or incorporated into your own spectacle lenses. If you are considering purchasing some of these, you should ensure that they also contain suitable filtering characteristics and are not just coloured plastic. The minimum filtering specification should include a blue visible and ultraviolet light filter. Some more expensive types also include an infrared filter (helps combat eye fatigue). Take care with adverts which state that their filters "block harmful UV" without stating how much! 100% blockage is required.

If you are in any doubt as to the suitability of filters, please consult your own Optician or Low Vision Specialist.

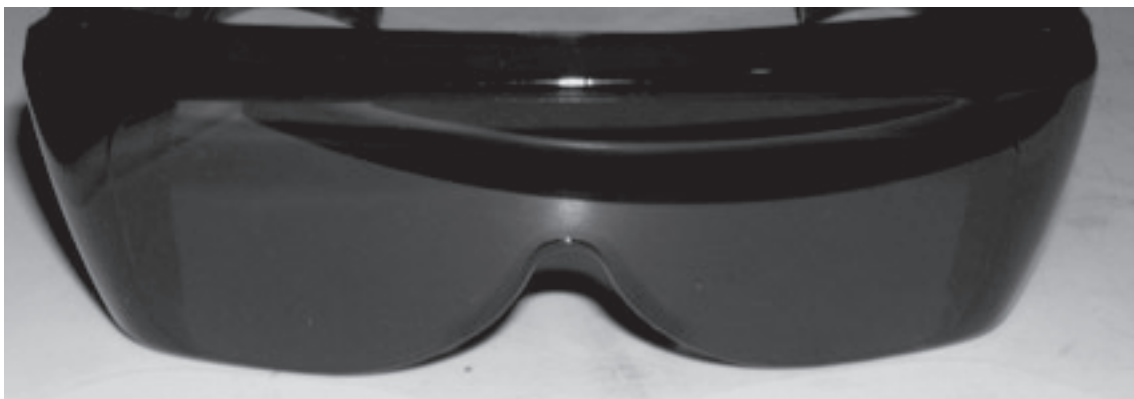
These filters come in a range of light transmissions and colours. It is important that you do not choose a pair, which are too dark and therefore reduce your vision further. Also take care that the

colour you choose does not affect your interpretation of colour as this could result in difficulty reading traffic/crossing signals accurately.

Some "experts" have expressed concern that tinted glasses might actually add to mobility problems. We tend to feel that uncorrected glare is more likely to have a deleterious effect on vision than correctly selected

filters and we often recommend their use. If, however, you feel that this is not an option you wish to consider, then a wide brimmed hat or a sun visor often help (sun visors are available from PSS in Doncaster). Our younger readers may well prefer a baseball cap (worn with the peak at the front) to help relieve their glare problems.

PSS can supply wrap-around UV (and Infrared) shields/filters.



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