



Caregiver Tip of the Month – June 2011

Notes from Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

VISION LOSS AND ITS IMPACT ON INDEPENDENCE

More than 25 million American adults have significant vision loss. Almost 25% of them are over the age of 65, 60% are women and 18% are minorities. * These numbers are expected to double as the baby boomers age. The first wave of baby boomers, about 78 million are turning 65 this year, 2011.

Severe vision loss affects quality of life, independence, and mental health. A change in sight has one of the greatest impacts on the elderly and their ability to function later in life. It creates difficulty with activities of daily living and life satisfaction. Sight impairments are a risk factor for falls, accidents and, are a leading cause for loss of driving privileges. Loss of vision is a common cause of depression in the elderly. The good news is the affects of vision loss can be reduced if caught in time.

Older eyes are more susceptible to common age-related diseases, such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and cataracts. Health problems such as diabetes also make the elderly at greater risk of eye disease. The National Eye Institute and the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommend everyone over 60 get a full, dilated eye exam every 2 years. More often if there is any kind of eye disease present.

Older adults experiencing vision loss need to develop new skills to remain self-reliant. Assistive devices are helpful. Most can be found at the local drug stores, specialty shops or through the internet. Some of the more useful ones are magnifiers, penlights, electronics, and audio products. Telephones with large dials and buttons and computers with big screens and special keyboards are also helpful.

RESOURCES:

- **Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho** (208)667-3179 / Toll Free (800)786-5536
- **Idaho Commission for the Blind** (208)769-1411 / Toll Free (800)542-8688
- **DAC – The Disability Action Center** (208)664-9896

*Facts and Figures based on Adults with Vision Loss – American Foundation for the Blind

Contact Betsy Bullard, Area Agency on Aging, at 667-3179, ext. 222, or email infoassist@aaani.org to find out more about these options and other resources. Visit our website at www.aaani.org.