



FACTS ABOUT  
**Albinism**

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the  
**Albinism Alliance**  
*group*

# “Our View” Albinism, Low Vision, And Adaptive Technology

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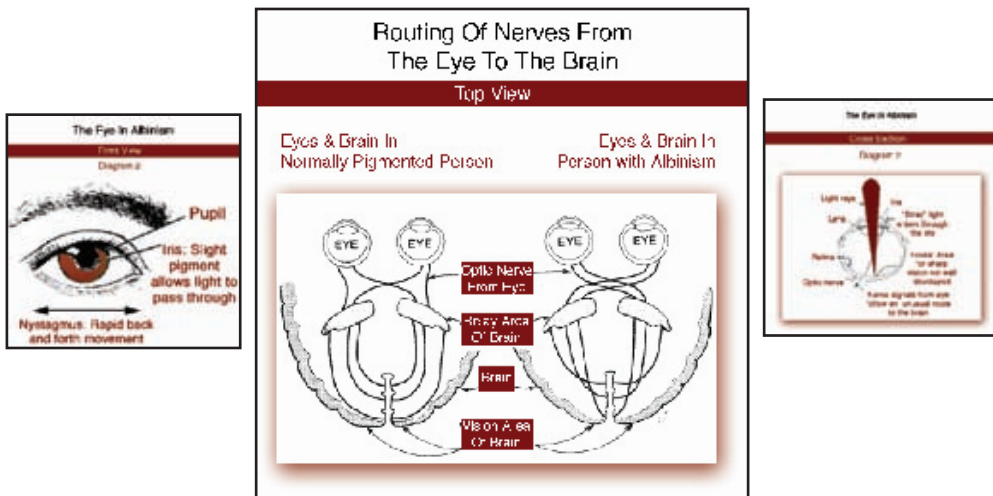
## Albinism & Low Vision

For persons with albinism, vision challenges can range from moderate to very difficult. Visual acuity, on average, ranges from 20/50 to as low as 20/200, without correction. In some cases 20/400 is recorded. With the advancement of technology today and low vision equipment it is possible to correct vision for a person with albinism up to 20/20.

The degree of acuity is relative. In other words, two individuals with an acuity of 20/200 do not see the same. Depth, detail, etc. can, and usually do, vary. The difference is viewing at a field degrees of 20 feet, when you are able to see things clearly at 20 feet the visual acuity is recorded as 20.20. With low vision variances in albinism the difference would be, at the range of 20 feet an object viewed may appear to be anywhere from 50 feet to 400 feet away.

An example, one individual seeing 20/200 may be able to read printed material with or without glasses at close range, while another individual may not be able to read print or see the same text at all. Furthermore, individual #1 with 20/200 may not require the use of adaptive technology or low vision aids such as a cane, a guide dog, on screen computer magnification such as Zoom Text for Windows or InLarge for the Mac OS operating system, magnifiers, the use of a driving bioptic, close circuit television, reading scanner, or braille whereas individual #2 may require the need of such assistance.

Of course periodic eye exams are a plus. However, finding a doctor who is knowledgeable of the low vision needs of children and adult individuals with albinism is very important. Positive reinforcement is vital and trying visual aids and a qualified physician suggesting positive alternative to that stabilize and protect the eye sight is best.



## Adaptive Technology and Education

The classroom tends to prove the greatest challenge with albinism and low vision attributes. Trying to read assignments from the chalkboard, even while sitting close, can be frustrating. Today methods of adaptive technology and ADA practices have vastly reduced this challenge.

In years past, reading standard print from textbooks could prove difficult and students may have had to hold books very closely to read accurately. Fortunately, textbooks with large print, cctv, on screen computer magnification software are now available. Use of this technology also enables students to read and complete assignments at a comparable rate. Large print text books, large print testing materials, auditory testing sessions, electronic testing formats, typing vs writing for written test format, additional testing time, and adaptive technology equipment may be available through correspondence with an institution's disability services for collegiate level learning. A vision resource instructor and parent involvement will facilitate a request at an IEP staffing for high and middle school learning levels.

Other alternatives include black lined paper, copies of the professors lecture notes from overhead, using a dark felt tip pen/ marker for note taking, or using a volunteer note taker and note taker paper. This three-layered paper has a master sheet, carbon paper in the middle and, a transfer sheet that serves as the note taker's copy. These methods are some of the many beneficial alternative for persons with albinism and low vision needs and using them still allow the student to remain independent in their studies.

Also available is the monocular lens, a small telescope that has a range of visual field and power, can be used to view objects clearly and read signs from a distance. This is excellent for individuals using public transportation. It is also helpful when reading bus numbers. Improvement in the aesthetics of visual aids is also a plus. Lenses for eyeglasses are thinner. Transition lenses that automatically switch from light to dark according to exposure to sun light and bright light are more readily available. A variety of tints and gradients for eyeglass lenses are available too. Sunglasses are more stylish but still beneficial for low vision needs. These improvements may help increase self confidence as they draw less attention than the older models, which seem to single out one's visual limitations.

Driving has become less of an issue over the last 10-15 years. Within the TAAG family, there are five licensed drivers! Now many people with albinism have the opportunity to drive thanks to the driving bioptic. The bioptic are eyeglasses that possess a mounted telescope on top of them and with proper training, allows persons with albinism and low vision to accurately identify/ read street, construction, and traffic signs and also see people and locations at a distance. With the bioptic an individual's vision may be corrected up to 20/20! It's a new world for us all.