

Consider Assistive Technology (AT) at home for children with Albinism



A love of books and reading is something to be valued and this can be supplemented with listening stories for those whose eyes tire easily, especially at the end of the day. Apps are available for smart phones, tablets and computers with a range of popular children's or adults novels. If possible, those with albinism will benefit from having their own age appropriate device, as they need to have it close to their face. They can also use these devices for a range of additional everyday activities that their sighted peers do without any assistance. Overuse of screens can lead to fatigue and time spent needs to be monitored, with breaks between use and before bedtime.

If children avoid reading or teachers indicate they are falling behind, this may indicate that they are having difficulty focussing on the words or being able to scan the page efficiently. "Domes" are usually the first thing introduced to pre-readers, followed by magnifiers (handheld, electronic, portable and desk top), monoculars or binoculars and teenagers may use bioptics (special magnifying lens on the edge of normal glasses). New technology and software is being developed all the time.

The zoom function in phones and tablets can enlarge text on restaurant menus, bus stop timetables or recipe books, while the cameras can take photos of text or things in the distance to then enlarge to view at leisure. There are excellent apps for navigating (knowing where you are without reading small street signs on poles), reading timetables and using public transport – all things which can be a special challenge for those with albinism. These activities, along with listening to stories and being able to play podcasts or replay lessons or work material, are just some of the ways personal devices provide special (and necessary) assistance for those with albinism, allowing them to keep up with peers.

Some things to consider when your child with albinism is using age appropriate screen devices

- The device (iPad or other portable screen) may need to be held close to the face to see easily – this will vary according to their vision. Let the child decide what is most comfortable, even if their nose is almost on the screen.
- In all screens it may be of benefit to reduce brightness down to 50% or less.

- It may help to reduce lighting in the room by shutting blinds or turning the lights off, as this can make it easier to see the screen.
- Beware of reducing the light too much as this can also make vision difficult.
- Some screens allow you to change text size, colour or background in order to see better
- Children usually need to be much closer to a TV screen (up to a metre).
- If a TV is mounted high on a wall or shelf, a child may have difficulty seeing it and experience neck pain as they look up. Mounting the TV at the child's eye level can make a big difference and reduce neck strain.
- Sometimes a beanbag on the floor in front of a low mounted TV will help, keeping your child below the line of vision for the rest of the family seated further back.

Computer use

- Make the mouse pointer bigger.
- Change the contrast on the screen or reducing brightness.
- Large Print Keyboard
- Bigger Monitor
- Adjust font sizes within “Windows” or “MacOS”.
- Use “Windows Zoom” or “Mac Zoom” built in magnifier software to enlarge what is on the screen.
- Install screen magnifier software such as “Zoomtext”.
- For those with particularly low vision, who suffer from eye fatigue or struggle reading long documents, a screen reader could be considered.