

Monocular Vision Tip Sheet

By Amy Michelle Yom

Monocular vision means having no vision in one eye but having adequate vision in the other eye. Becoming monocular from unilateral childhood glaucoma is very rare but may occur in severe cases.

Monocular Driving

- 1) **Getting your license:** Check your state's vision requirements. If you are monocular, you may be required to have an optometrist complete a vision exam and fill out a form rather than taking the standard vision test at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Depending on the vision level in the sighted eye, you may also be subject to additional driving restrictions.
- 2) **Mirrors:** Be sure to have adequate side and rear view mirrors; in many cases, a larger rearview mirror and convex mirroring on the wing (side) mirrors can eliminate blind spots.
- 3) **Visual cues:** Use the size of objects to gauge distance/speed and be especially careful switching lanes. Leave extra space between you and the car in front of you.
- 4) **Sunglasses:** Keep a pair of sunglasses handy in the car at all times to provide optimal vision in strong sunlight.
- 5) **Ground yourself:** Use fixed objects as reference points when parking (hanging tennis ball in garage, parking meter, etc.)

Position Yourself for Success

- 1) **Seating arrangements:** At restaurants, meetings, movies, etc. try to sit with your blind side next to the wall so you get the best view of your surroundings with your sighted eye. This will save you from a lot of neck swiveling and cramping.
- 2) **Walking:** Walk with your sighted eye next to the road for optimal awareness and safety (ex. If you are blind in your left eye, walk on the left side of the street so your right eye can easily see the road.)
- 3) **Crowds:** Be extra cautious in crowds in cities or concerts. Frequently scan your immediate area so you are aware of all your surroundings. If you must turn towards your blind side, do so slowly and try to leave extra space between you and others.

The World is Your Oyster!

- 1) **Pursue your dreams:** Monocular people can and do work successfully in all types of careers. In the United States, there are very few career restrictions for monocular people. A few jobs that may require binocular and full peripheral vision include the armed services, police, firefighting, and commercial interstate drivers.
- 2) **You're in good company:** There are many famous monocular people including musician Sammy Davis Jr., former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, model Sonia Velasquez, Hollywood actor David Duchovny, and the King of Thailand (just to name a few!). In fact, you have probably encountered a monocular individual in your life—but just never knew it.
- 3) **Sports advantage:** Being monocular can actually give you an advantage in some target sports like archery, bowling, shooting, and snooker. Ever wonder why seasoned players shut one eye in pool?

Know Thyself

- 1) **Monocular moments:** Be sensitive to when you are prone to having a monocular moment, such as accidentally walking into a partially opened door on your blind side. Understand when you are tired, and when to exercise additional caution.
- 2) **Protect your eyes:** Monocular people should wear glasses to protect their sighted eye, even if they have perfect vision. When outside, wear sunglasses at all times.
- 3) **Dealing with challenges:** Being monocular can sometimes be frustrating. However, maintaining a positive attitude and strong support system can help you through the tough times. When all else fails, remember that you won't be standing wide eyed in front of the those ugly Magic Eye posters or wearing 3-D glasses to movies like those silly binocular people!

Amy Michelle Yom the founder of the Congenital Glaucoma Network (www.congenitalglaucomanetwork.com) and was born with unilateral congenital glaucoma. She has been functionally monocular for the past thirty years. Five months ago she opted to have an evisceration surgery and now wears scleral shell prosthesis. She may be reached at congenital.glaucoma [at] gmail.com.