

Two Surprising Causes of Photophobia

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Photophobia is a sensitivity or intolerance of light, and it can cause people to avoid sunlight, computers, fluorescent lights and car headlights. Instead of altering their life to avoid the stimuli that provokes light sensitivity, people should address the underlying cause of photophobia.

Our guess is that in many cases, people aren't aware of 2 surprising reasons for a person's light sensitivity:

1. Poor binocular vision
2. Accommodation

In case you're not familiar with the terms, binocular vision is the process by which your two eyes work together to produce 3D vision. Accommodation is the process by which your eye changes its optical power to maintain a clear image or focus on an object as its distance changes.

When a person has difficulty with either of these 2 visual skills, photophobia can result. In essence, your visual system has problems organizing light. When you also cannot ignore it, the result is glare and photophobia.

How do I know photophobia is affecting me?

We're all sensitive to bright lights to some degree. But if you find that your sensitivity is affecting your everyday life, then you should consider getting a Functional Vision Test to determine if you have a vision problem that could be corrected.

What do we mean by "affecting your everyday life?" Photophobia is adversely affecting your life if:

- You avoid going outside on sunny days
- You can't work in a room with fluorescent lighting
- You won't drive at night because of headlights
- You have more difficulty working at your computer than reading from paper

These are very typical symptoms for people who have eye teaming and focusing problems. Because of this, we do see more photophobia in certain populations. These include people with exotropia (eye turns out), brain injury patients and people on the autism spectrum.

Fortunately, both eye teaming and focusing problems can be addressed through vision therapy. Sometimes a pair of glasses prescribed specifically to help organize the light can be extremely helpful in reducing symptoms. It all begins with isolating the root cause of the photophobia, however. A proper diagnosis can be made with a Functional Vision Test.