



RETINA
australia

Guide for friends of someone diagnosed with an IRD

Diagnosis

The most helpful way people can assist those dealing with vision loss, is to be genuinely attentive, patient, empathetic and non-patronising. Open communication and a positive attitude will help everyone involved to manage the transition.

You may be concerned for your friend and their future and you may worry how their vision impairment will affect your friendship and the time you spend together; these are normal concerns. Education is key in helping you be a supportive friend.



There are many online resources where you can find information about your friend's specific IRD and how it may affect them. It is also good to not be afraid to ask your friend what they are experiencing and if they need help (emotional or physical).

Practical support

The simplest way for you to know what support your friend needs is to ask.

Observe what they can do without help. If you see them struggling with a task, ask if help is wanted. In time you will learn when you can proactively assist and when you should allow them time to complete a task themselves. Other ways you can provide practical support are:

- Listen to any suggestions such as how to arrange the house, keeping the floor clear of objects, not moving the furniture, shutting doors, clearing clutter, pushing in chairs and adjusting lighting.
- When out, try to give warning of unexpected hazards such as steps, sloping pathways, uneven surfaces and doorways. Let them know if you enter a room with a simple 'hi' and make it known you're leaving a room so your friend isn't left talking to thin air.
- Learn the correct technique for being a 'sighted guide'. There are many tutorials (including videos) online.
- Be mindful of whether the disease is degenerative or progressive as adjustments may need to change over time.
- Offer to help with figuring out transport options and solving other mobility challenges. Be mindful of these challenges when planning events or hang outs.
- Encourage them to try out the various tools, devices and technology.
- Support their involvement in activities they are interested in.

Emotional support

- Try not to be overprotective or patronising.
- Listen when your friend needs someone to talk to. Try to gauge when your friend is seeking advice or solutions or when they just need to vent.
- Ensure you involve the person in decision making about anything that will affect them.
- Sometimes your support won't be enough, after all you're not an expert! Encourage getting access to professional help and support if needed.

