



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Driving after a Stroke: vision

Orthoptic Department

Patient information

What is this information about?

This information is about the visual (sight) problems you may have after a stroke. This includes loss of sight in different parts of your vision, and problems with eye movement. This can affect your ability to drive safely.

Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because you, a family member, or someone you are a carer for, has had a stroke and may have problems with vision.

Reading this information will help you to understand:

- how problems with vision can affect driving
- what you have to do before you can start driving again.

What visual problems might happen to me after a stroke?

Following a stroke, you might experience problems with your vision, but you are not alone. Up to two thirds of people experience some changes to their vision after a stroke.

How you are affected depends on exactly where the stroke occurred in your brain. There are four main types of visual problems. You may experience one or more:

1. Central vision loss

Central vision loss is the partial or complete loss of vision in one or more commonly both of your eyes. You may not be able to see anything at all, or you may only be able to see things around the edge of your vision, but not in the centre.

2. Visual field loss

Your visual field is everything you can see, straight ahead and to the side (periphery).

Visual field loss after a stroke usually affects both eyes. It means that you are unable to see properly either to the left or to the right of the centre of your field of vision.

Where you have difficulties relates to where the stroke occurred in your brain.

3. Eye movement problems

A stroke can lead to a variety of problems with the fine nerve control that is needed to move your eyes.

Impaired eye movements

These may affect your eyes' ability to move from looking at one object to another or to follow a moving object (like someone walking past). These problems can make reading more difficult. They can also affect your general mobility (how well you move around). For example, if you are unable to look around quickly, walking outside is likely to be more challenging.

You may have blurred vision or double vision (diplopia). This can lead to impaired depth perception and difficulty locating objects. For example, when making a cup of tea, you may not be able to judge where the cup is and pour water over its edge rather than into it. You may have difficulty judging the depth of steps or curbs.

Nystagmus

This means you see objects constantly wobbling. This can be very distressing and disorientating.

4. Visual processing problems

You may experience a change in your awareness and perception of the world around you. This is called visual neglect and is the most common visual processing problem.

Visual hallucinations are quite common after a sudden loss of vision. This can be very distressing.

Is there any treatment for these visual problems?

- Allow time for the brain to heal. Fortunately, many people do recover well.
- Double vision from eye movement problems can be treated with prisms or a patch. These can relieve symptoms while you are waiting to recover.
- Visual rehabilitation officers can give you extra help. They can teach you strategies to help you adapt.
- There is a wide range of specialist equipment and household items available to help you at home.

Is it still safe to drive after a stroke?

After a stroke your ability to drive safely can be affected.

The DVLA state that you **cannot** drive with:

- double vision
- blurred vision below a certain level
- visual field loss. Most importantly, if it interferes with central vision.

It is important to have a proper assessment of your visual problems so that you receive an accurate diagnosis. This can take place in a hospital eye department.

Be aware

You **cannot** drive for one month after a stroke. You may return to driving after this time if there are **no lasting effects**.

If you have been advised not to drive, please seek medical advice before returning to driving.

Do I need to tell the DVLA that I have had a stroke?

During the first month after a stroke, you do not have to tell the DVLA, even though you are not allowed to drive.

One month after your stroke, you will need to tell the DVLA if you have any on-going effects from your stroke.

It is your responsibility to tell the DVLA of any medical condition that may affect your ability to drive safely.

Other useful information

Stroke Association

www.stroke.org.uk

Driving and transport GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/browse/driving

Orthoptic Department telephone numbers

If you are booked or expecting a follow-up with the orthoptic team:

St Richard's Hospital Orthoptists 01243 831499

Southlands Hospital Orthoptists 01273 446077

Sussex Eye Hospital Orthoptists 01273 664872

Princess Royal Hospital Orthoptists

01444 441881 Ext. 68305

Useful information:

Squintclinic www.squintclinic.com

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