

Changes in vision frequently occur following a stroke however it can often be difficult to explain what has changed about your sight.

Visual defects can be distressing and delay rehabilitation therefore prompt vision assessment is important following a stroke.

HOW CAN A STROKE AFFECT MY VISION?

The most common symptoms include;

- Loss of part of your visual field**
- Blurred or double vision**
- Difficulty reading**

The following may cause these:

VISUAL FIELD LOSS

Some strokes may affect the ability to see objects in the periphery, this normally occurs on the same side as the weakness that affects the limbs; this is called a visual field defect.

The most common visual field defects following stroke are; **homonymous hemianopia** (half of the visual field missing) and **quadrantonopia** (quarter of the visual field missing).

Hemianopia



Quadrantonopia



Many people with these conditions feel they have lost the vision in one eye but both eyes are affected when looking to one side.

Recovery of visual field defects normally occurs within the first or second month following the stroke, this may vary but any defect present after this time may be permanent.

How could this affect you?

People with visual field loss may find they are **continuously bumping into things** or **misplacing objects to one side**.

It may also cause difficulties with reading, such as **skipping words** or **missing lines** therefore the text may not make sense.

EYE MOVEMENT PROBLEMS

A stroke may cause problems with the movement of the eyes resulting in difficulty using the eyes together as a pair and **blurred, moving or double vision**.



This can cause difficulty focussing and may impact on the ability to perform everyday tasks.

There are many different types of eye movement problems that could be caused by a stroke or brain injury, and these can all be assessed by your orthoptist.

Treatment may involve;

- Prisms (lenses on your glasses)
- Occlusion (covering one eye)
- Eye exercises
- Eye muscle surgery

Your orthoptist will advise you on the best treatment for you.

VISUAL PROCESSING PROBLEMS

To recognise objects in front of us the brain must process visual information received from the eyes about that object, this process may be affected by a stroke resulting in a change in awareness of the world around us.

A common visual processing difficulty is **VISUAL NEGLECT**. People with visual neglect will be unaware of anything or anyone on one side; this may include **missing one half of the food on their plate, difficulty reading, ignoring people** on their affected side.

Often somebody with visual neglect will be **symptom free** and may **deny that they have a problem**.

Recovery of visual neglect is complex and not fully understood but is often good; however, continued care is important to promote awareness of the ignored side if visual neglect does persist.

VISUAL HALLUCINATIONS can be common **following a stroke** or **following sudden loss of vision**, recovery can vary but generally hallucinations become less intense over time. If the hallucinations persist, talk to your GP who may be able to refer you to a specialist.

REFERRAL

If you feel you have any of the problems discussed in this leaflet please mention these to your **occupational therapist, physiotherapist, GP** or other health professional to discuss referral to the **ORTHOPTIC DEPARTMENT**.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visual Inattention Following Stroke Leaflet

Visual Field Loss Following Stroke or Head Injury leaflet

<http://www.stroke.org.uk/about/visual-problems>

www.rnib.org.uk

CONTACT

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**PATIENT
INFORMATION**

Visual Problems Following Stroke



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