

**R N I B**

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Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland



# Vision after stroke



Essential Guide

# This essential guide is about vision changes after a stroke.

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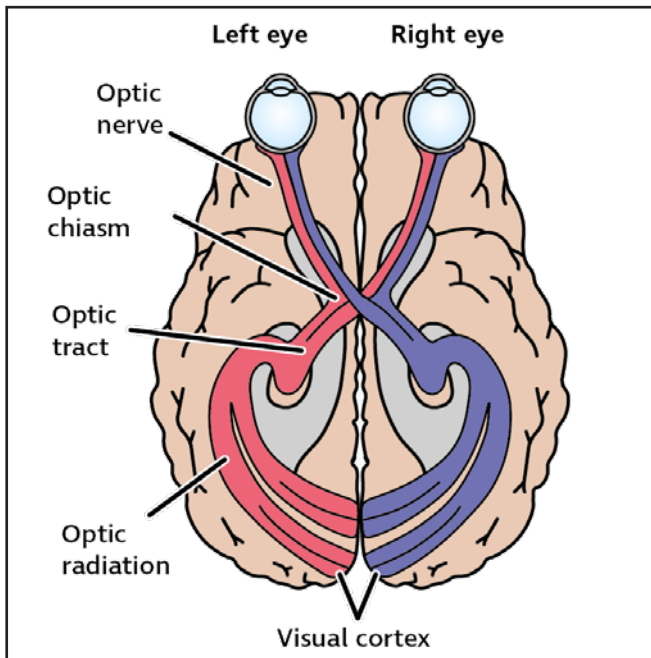
# How does a stroke affect vision?

Your brain gets visual information from your eyes. It processes this information to allow you to see. Stroke can damage these visual processing pathways.

Around **two out of every three people** who have a stroke experience some kind of visual change as a result.

Most of these visual changes are caused by **damage to the brain, not the eyes.**

This image is highlighting the primary visual pathways. Damage on one side of the brain affects the opposite side of the body.



# Signs of stroke

A stroke is recognised by the signs:

## **FAST.**

This stands for:

**Face:** Facial features asymmetrical or uneven.

**Arm:** One arm or leg suddenly weak, or difficulty raising one arm.

**Speech:** Sudden slurring, difficulty finding words, or seeming confused.

**Time** to call 999.

If you notice any of these signs, call an ambulance immediately.

## **Other signs and symptoms of stroke include sudden:**

- Visual changes.
- Balance difficulties.
- Confusion.

# Who to talk to

If you notice changes in your vision after a stroke, speak to your GP or a specialist, such as:

- An **orthoptist** assesses your vision after a stroke.
- An **optometrist**. If you have not seen an orthoptist please visit your local high street optometrist/opticians for a full, free (in Scotland) vision test.
- A **visual rehabilitation specialist** within your local area will provide advice on how best to use your remaining vision and access specialist support.

- An **ophthalmologist**. They are an eye doctor who diagnoses, medically treats and manages eye conditions.
- Your **stroke team** or **stroke nurses**.
- An **occupational therapist (OT)**. They provide support for independent living.

# Visual effects of stroke

Common visual changes after stroke include:

## **Photophobia or light sensitivity**

Light may be uncomfortable, or it may be difficult to adjust to different levels of light. Wrap around, tinted glasses may help.

## **Visual field loss**

Loss of part of your visual field (central and peripheral vision). This can reduce your safety when moving around as you may bump into things. It can also make it difficult to read. For more information see our factsheet on **Visual field loss**.

## **Double vision**

Also called “diplopia”. For more information see our factsheet on **Double vision**.

## **Visual perception issues**

After a stroke your brain may not be able to recognise objects and faces, make up words from letters, or direct visual attention.

## **Visual neglect**

Difficulty noticing or paying attention to things on one side of your visual field. For more information see our factsheet on **Visual neglect**.

## Visual hallucinations

Sudden sight loss from stroke can cause visual hallucinations. This may be diagnosed as Charles Bonnet Syndrome. RNIB has more information about this condition: [rnib.in/CharlesBonnetSyndrome](https://www.rnib.org.uk/CharlesBonnetSyndrome)

## Changes to eye movements

A stroke can affect the muscle movements of your eye and eyelids, causing difficulties with:

- Moving your focus between objects.
- Following or tracking objects, or looking around.
- Reading.
- Moving around or walking.
- Depth perception and judging distance.

# Making the most of your sight

Your eye care professionals can explain what options there are to manage changes in your vision after stroke. For example, scanning exercises, optical aids or assistive technologies.

For more information, visit:  
**[visibilityscotland.org.uk/the-knowledge/](https://visibilityscotland.org.uk/the-knowledge/)**

Fatigue is common after stroke and can make visual symptoms worse. For more on managing fatigue, see the CHSS booklet on **Tiredness and Fatigue**.

## **Useful techniques for supporting your vision after a stroke include:**

- Keep things tidy and free of clutter. This can help reduce the risk of falls and make picking out individual items easier.
- Make sure doors are not kept half open as they can be easy to bump into.
- It can be beneficial to make natural and artificial lighting controllable. For example, the use of vertical blinds, dimmer switches, and anti-glare wrap around glasses.
- Increase the font size, line space and contrast, and decrease the clutter on digital devices.

- Use a ruler or thick piece of card with a rectangle cut out of it to keep track when reading. To reduce glare you can use a transparent plastic sheet.
- Use contrast to help make things stand out - e.g., mark the edges of doors or steps with bright tape.
- A symbol cane can alert others to your vision change and allow them to give you more time or space. **Speak to your local Sensory Services or vision impairment charity.**

# Who we are

This booklet was produced by three charities:



## **Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland**

Tel: **0808 801 0899**

Web: **chss.org.uk**

Email: **adviceline@chss.org.uk**



## **Visibility Scotland**

Tel: **0800 987 1087**

Web: **visibilityscotland.org.uk**

Email: **info@visibilityscotland.org.uk**

**RNIB**

## **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**

Tel: **0303 123 9999**

Web: **rnib.org.uk**

Email: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

# More help and support

## **NHS Inform**

NHS Scotland's online resource for patients.  
**nhsinform.scot**

## **British and Irish Orthoptics Society**

For professional links, advice and information.  
**orthoaptics.org.uk/resources**  
**Tel: 0121 728 5633**

## **Vision Research Unit**

For research opportunities and information.  
**vision-research.co.uk**

## **eyes.scot**

National website for information and eye services. Can help find nearby optometrists.  
**eyes.scot**

Our publications are free to everyone in Scotland, in PDF and in print. See them all at [www.chss.org.uk/resources-hub](http://www.chss.org.uk/resources-hub)

For free, confidential advice and support from our Advice Line Team, contact:

**0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm)**

**text ADVICE to 66777**

**[advice@chss.org.uk](mailto:advice@chss.org.uk)**

One in five people in Scotland are affected by chest, heart and stroke conditions or Long Covid. Go to [www.chss.org.uk/supportus](http://www.chss.org.uk/supportus) to find out how you can help us support more people in Scotland.

To give feedback or request alternative formats, email: [health.information@chss.org.uk](mailto:health.information@chss.org.uk)

**Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland**



**NO LIFE HALF LIVED**



Visibility Scotland



**Scan here to see  
all our resources!**

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