

Double Vision (Diplopia)

Chest
Heart &
Stroke
Scotland



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You might find it helpful to look at the other resources in this series on:

- **Vision after Stroke**
- **Visual Inattention**
- **Visual Field Loss**

Key Points

- Double vision, also called diplopia, happens when your eyes are not working together or moving properly. This means you will see two images at the same time.
- Double vision can make you feel sick and dizzy, affect your balance, your hand-eye coordination, and your ability to move around safely.
- The symptoms of double vision can sometimes be helped with prisms or by covering one of your eyes.
- If you have double vision after a stroke, you should have your eyes assessed by an ophthalmologist and orthoptist.

What is double vision?

Double vision (diplopia) is where you see two images of the same object one on top of the other, or side by side, or a combination of both.

If the two images are close together, you may see them as a blurred single image, rather than two clearly separate ones.

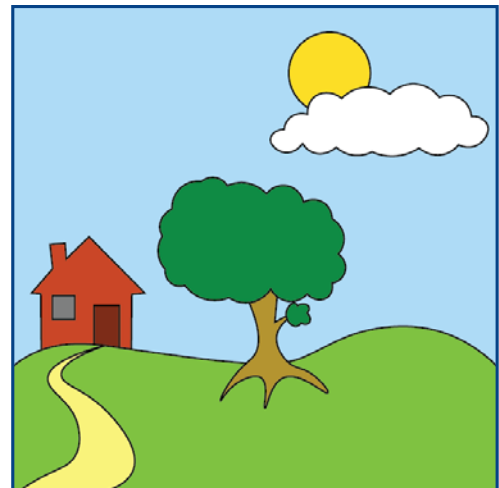
This can make you feel dizzy and sick and cause balance difficulties. It can also make some activities difficult or unsafe. For example, when making a cup of tea, you may miss pouring water into your cup because you see two of them. You may find you are closing one eye, this sometimes helps.

If you have double vision, you must stop driving immediately and inform the **DVLA**. You can drive again if a doctor tells the DVLA that it is safe for you to do so.

For more information, see: www.gov.uk/eye-conditions-and-driving.

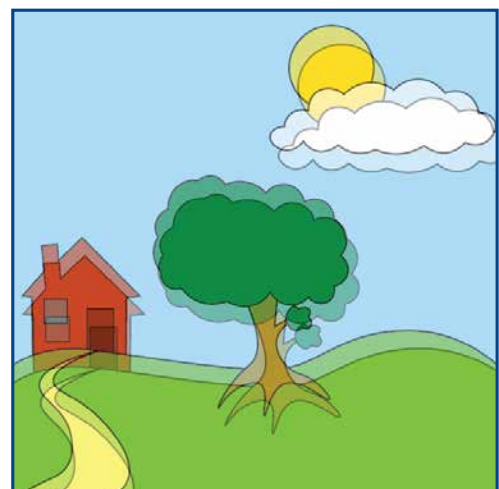
Normal vision:

This image on the right shows a cartoon view of a house, a tree, and a sun, without changed vision interrupting the image.



Double vision:

This image on the right shows the same cartoon view as before, but as it would be seen with someone with diplopia/double vision. There are two versions of the image overlaid on top of each other, making it difficult to see clearly or pick out details. It may also be referred to as blurred or jumbled vision. Sometimes the two images are further apart.



Managing double vision

Using prisms can help double images to be seen as a single one. Occlusion, or patching one eye, stops the second image being seen. Some people may experience headaches or confused vision at first when using these aids. You may need time to adapt.

Get in touch with an orthoptist for support with assessment and help with the symptoms of double vision.

Prisms

Prisms for eye movement problems are used to help eliminate double vision. They are very effective when double vision is minor, and when the extent of the double vision does not change significantly as you look around.

Fresnel prisms are thin, transparent plastic sheets that stick to the surface of your glasses, changing the direction of light as it enters your eye. One side has a series of angular grooves (prisms). The other side is smooth and attaches to the lens of your glasses.

The strength needed may change over time. If so, the Fresnel prism can be removed from your glasses and a new one of a different strength put on.

If your double vision lasts a long time, the prism can be replaced with a permanent alternative. Once the required strength becomes stable, the Fresnel prism can be replaced with a permanent prism incorporated into the glasses lens itself, where it can't be seen.

Occlusion and patches

You must speak to an optometrist or orthoptist to assess and decide whether the use of occlusion or patches is suitable for you.

Usually occlusion is done by applying a frosting sticker or tape to one lens of your glasses. If your eye is fully occluded by a patch, you will have what is called monocular vision - i.e. you will only see out of one eye.

Monocular vision can cause problems with reduced 3D vision or depth perception. This can lead to mobility issues. For example, judging distance or the height of a step can be difficult. You can find further information on monocular vision on the **RNIB** website ([rnib.org.uk/eyehealth](https://www.rnib.org.uk/eyehealth)) or by calling the **RNIB Helpline** on **0303 123 9999**.

This factsheet is produced by three charities:



Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland

Information, advice, and support for chest, heart, stroke, and Long Covid conditions.

Tel: **0808 801 0899**

Text: **ADVICE to 66777**

Email: adviceline@chss.org.uk

Web: chss.org.uk



Visibility Scotland

Person-centred services to people of all ages affected by vision impairment and blindness, empowering them to reach their goals and aspirations.

Tel: **0800 987 1087**

Web: visibilityscotland.org.uk

Email: info@visibilityscotland.org.uk

R N I B

Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB)

Information, support, and advice on living with sight loss and stroke-related eye conditions.

Tel: **0303 123 9999**

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Web: rnib.org.uk

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You can also go to our website for information, advice and support: www.chss.org.uk

Find a range of easy-to-read booklets and factsheets at our resources hub:

www.chss.org.uk/resources-hub



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