

# Your Vision After Stroke

## Visual Inattention

### Introduction

A stroke can change how you notice things around you. This is called visual inattention or visual neglect. You might have trouble seeing or paying attention to one side. People with visual inattention often do not know they have it, but it can cause safety problems, especially when walking or moving.

This handout explains this condition and provides tips to manage it. With care and support, visual inattention can get better.

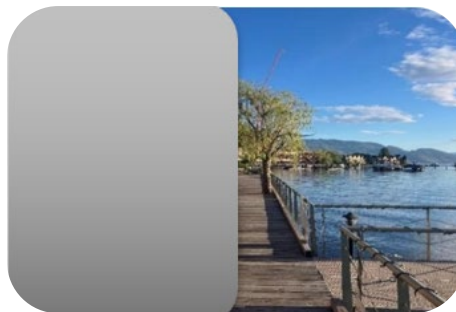
### Visual inattention

After a stroke, you might have trouble noticing things on one side of your body or surroundings. Visual inattention often happens when the stroke affects the right side of your brain, which can make you ignore things on your left side. You may not even realize this is happening.

For example:

- You might not see people or objects on one side
- You might not notice your own arm or leg on one side.

Sometimes, this happens along with **visual field loss**, which means part of your vision is missing. It can be hard to notice things on one side, as shown below.



Visual field loss and visual inattention happening together can mean you are unable to see or notice surroundings on one side.

To learn more, ask your healthcare provider for the Alberta Health Services patient information on **Your Vision After Stroke - Visual Field Loss**.

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in collaboration with the Provincial EyeSee After Stroke Working Group

## Signs of visual inattention

After leaving the hospital, you or your family might notice changes in how you do everyday things and that you need more therapy. These changes can be small or more noticeable, but all are important.

Some signs to watch for:

- You bump into things or trip more often
- You walk off to one side without meaning to
- You miss words on one side when reading

Other signs that might affect your daily routine:

- It's hard to get out of bed from one side
- You only dress or wash one side of your body
- You may only eat from one side of your plate or miss items on one side

You can ask for a referral to an occupational therapist (OT) who can help you with your visual inattention and help you find ways to adjust and stay safe and independent.

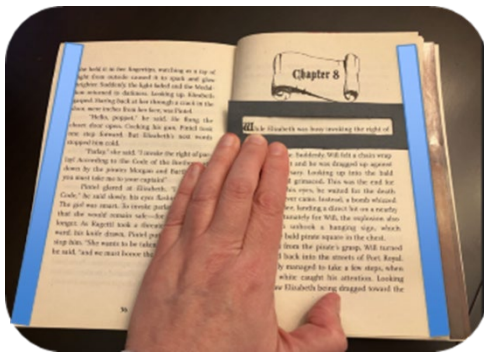


## Helpful strategies

With help from an occupational therapist, you can learn strategies to improve your daily life.

These may include:

- Learning to look toward or scan to the affected side.
- During important conversations, have others sit on your stronger (unaffected) side.
- Reducing distractions on the affected side to help focus attention.
- Reading strategies such as using line guides or highlighted margins.



Some other activities you could try:

- Using apps or games designed to improve attention.
- Doing word searches or spot the difference.
- Recommending people sit on your affected side to help you practice looking that way.



## Safety and other tips

- Keep your home free of clutter to avoid falls.
- Always hold the railing when using stairs.
- Ask your family or caregivers to approach you from the side you see best.
- Keep important items (like your phone or glasses) on the side you can see.
- Ask others for help with things like crossing the street.

## Driving after a stroke

In Alberta, it is your legal responsibility to tell Alberta Transportation, Driver Fitness and Monitoring about any health issue that may affect your ability to drive safely, including that you had a stroke.



It is important to get guidance with the reporting process by discussing it with your rehabilitation team, nurse practitioner, or medical doctor. You can find more information about the process on the website: [alberta.ca/report-a-medical-condition.aspx](https://alberta.ca/report-a-medical-condition.aspx)

After a stroke, you should ask your medical team, or healthcare providers, whether you are safe to return to driving. If you have ongoing visual problems, you may not be able to return to driving.

Your doctor or vision specialist will be able to assess and offer advice on whether you meet vision requirements for driving.

Even if you feel that your vision is better, it is important you do not return to driving until you have been told by a medical professional that you are safe to do so and you get confirmation from Driver Fitness and Monitoring.

Your rehabilitation team or medical doctor may contact Alberta Transportation to advise them if you are ready to return to driving. You may need a special driving assessment before you return to driving.



## Additional resources

Alberta Health Services Stroke Care in Alberta  
[ahs.ca/stroke](https://ahs.ca/stroke)

MyHealth.Alberta.ca - Driving After a Stroke  
[myhealth.alberta.ca/health/AfterCareInformation/pages/conditions.aspx?HwId=custom.ab\\_stroke\\_driving\\_inst](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/AfterCareInformation/pages/conditions.aspx?HwId=custom.ab_stroke_driving_inst)

Government of Alberta Driver Medical Fitness  
[alberta.ca/driver-medical-fitness](https://alberta.ca/driver-medical-fitness)

Canadian Stroke Best Practices  
[strokebestpractices.ca/recommendations/stroke-rehabilitation-delivery/8-visual-and-visual-perceptual-impairment](https://strokebestpractices.ca/recommendations/stroke-rehabilitation-delivery/8-visual-and-visual-perceptual-impairment)

Heart and Stroke - Changes in Perception  
[heartandstroke.ca/stroke/recovery-and-support/emotions/changes-in-perception](https://heartandstroke.ca/stroke/recovery-and-support/emotions/changes-in-perception)

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (search for **Concentrated Programs > Stroke**)  
[visionlossrehab.ca](https://visionlossrehab.ca)

This patient education material was reviewed in November 2024 by an interdisciplinary team of stroke, vision and rehabilitation specialists from across Alberta.

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