

# How to Manage Vision Issues After a Stroke or Brain Injury

## Vision Issues

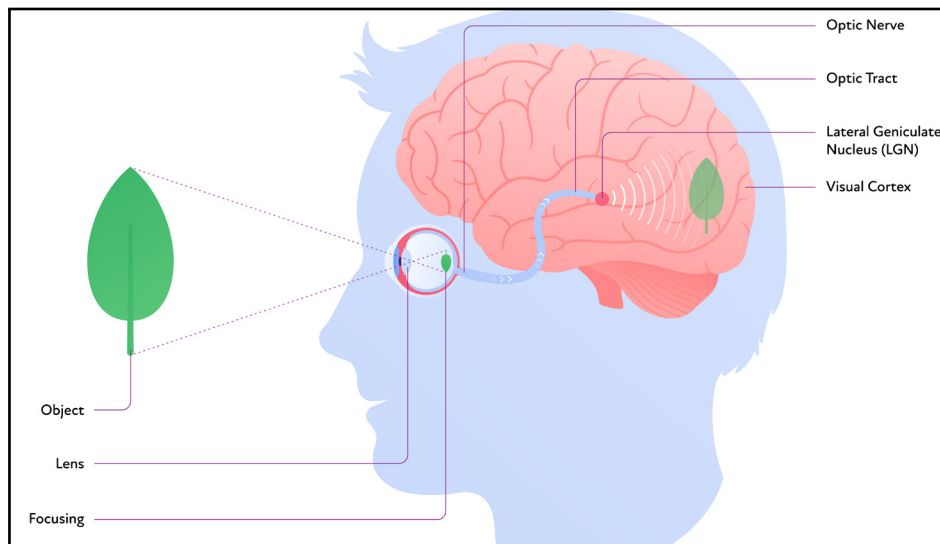
Problems with vision are common after a stroke or brain injury. Most problems happen between the brain and the optic nerve.

When brain signals are interrupted, your brain can't understand what it is "seeing." This means you may have problems with your vision that can affect all areas of your life.

During the first few months of your recovery, your eyes are going through rapid changes while working toward normal vision. Managing your symptoms can help your vision recover.

### Common issues

- vision loss
- blurred vision
- double vision
- weakness with the muscles around your eyes
- problems with your side (peripheral) vision
- problems quickly focusing after doing a close activity or hobby such as reading or knitting
- problems looking at a computer, TV or phone screen
- problems looking at moving objects
- problems focusing in a busy environment
- problems judging the distance of objects
- feeling like the floor is tilted (causing you to lean)



**Vision is more than just seeing clearly. Your visual system is a complex network of brain cells that process and interpret your visual experience. Damage to anything in the visual network can cause issues with your vision.**

- having other issues such as:
  - thinking words are blurry or moving on a page or screen
  - having issues understanding what you are seeing
  - being unaware of one side of your visual field.

### **How you may feel**

You may have some or all of the following:

- eye strain
- dizziness
- nausea (feel like throwing up)
- vomiting (throwing up)
- headaches
- sensitivity to light
- feeling more tired than usual
- feeling overwhelmed in busy spaces such as a grocery store or while driving
- feeling anxious
- trouble tolerating noises, smells or visual details
- trouble with visual movements such as video games or reading.

The good news is managing your visual deficits can help reduce these issues.

## **How to Manage Vision Issues**

### **Take breaks**

- Take breaks before you have symptoms.
- Rest your eyes every 10 minutes by looking 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Do something else that has fewer vision demands.
- Use palming.
  - Cover your eyes with your hands.
  - Take slow or deep breaths.

### **Adjust lighting**

- Try different tinted glasses for outdoor use and screen time.
- Turn off overhead lights and use task lighting (such as a desk lamp).

### **Manage screen time**

- Limit screen time.
- Take breaks.
- Try different backgrounds and screen lighting.

### **Doing near tasks**

- Use rulers, index cards or guides to improve your visual focus.
- Change the size of text on your computer.

## Reduce visual clutter

- Create clean places you can work in.
- Use a basket for items you use most often.
- Put away clutter for 5 minutes each day in rooms you use often.
- Keep items where they belong.
- Keep items you use the most handy.

## Avoid overstimulation

- Plan ahead when you have to go somewhere that could lead to overstimulation.
- Try to rest in a quiet room or listen to soothing music or a meditation.
- Wear an eye mask while you rest.

## When to Talk With Your Health Care Provider

Talk with your health care provider if:

- your vision does not get better
- you have any new symptoms
- you need adaptive or community resources
- you have questions or concerns.

## Know What Triggers Your Symptoms

Processing visual information can take a lot of energy and may cause you to have symptoms.

Changing your environment or task can help your vision and lower the energy you need.

Mark the things that trigger your symptoms.

- lighting
- screen time (computer, phone, TV, video games or movies)

near tasks (reading, or moving from 1 document to another or 1 line to the next)

visual distractors (such as clutter)

busy environments (such as grocery stores, malls, stadiums and other public places)

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