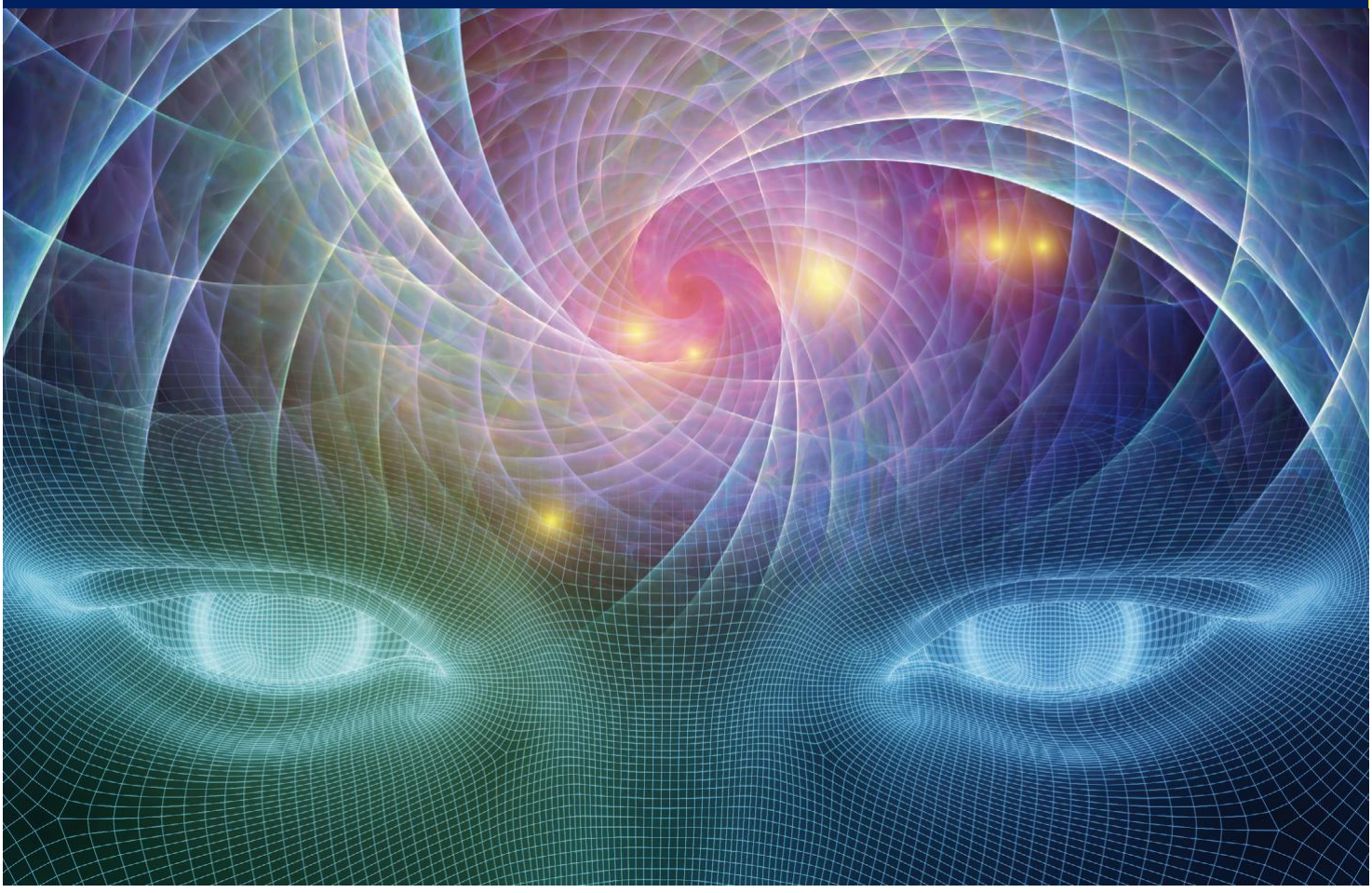
BIOS | BRITISH AND IRISH ORTHOPTIC SOCIETY

Large Print Version

Driving and visual defects following stroke or brain injury



Driving a car following stroke or brain injury (visual impairment)

Can I drive a car after having a stroke?

Initially following a stroke, you are not permitted to drive a car or motorcycle for at least one month. This may be longer if you have had surgery or other complications.

This driving restriction is longer for those with a group 2 licence (buses, heavy goods vehicles and lorries). In general, those with a group 2 licence are not permitted to drive for twelve months following a stroke. In addition, the eyesight requirements for group 2 driving are stricter than for group 1.

If after the period of restriction, you have a persistent visual problem such as reduced vision, double vision, visual field loss, or visual perception difficulty, the DVLA states that you are not normally accepted as safe for driving. Your orthoptist will be able to offer advice on whether you meet the DVLA vision requirements for driving.

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, even if you feel that your vision has improved. If a visual impairment is still present at 3 months post-stroke DVLA must be informed and your driving licence will be revoked.

Vision required for driving a car

You must be able to read (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) a car number plate made after 1 September 2001 from 20 metres.

You must also meet the minimum eyesight standard for driving by having a visual acuity of at least decimal 0.5 (6/12) (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) using both eyes together or, if you have sight in one eye only, in that eye.

An orthoptist or optometrist will be able to tell you if you meet this standard. You must tell DVLA if you have any problem with your eyesight that affects both of your eyes, or the remaining eye if you only have one eye.

Can I drive with double vision (diplopia)?

No, you cannot drive with double vision. You must tell DVLA immediately if you have double vision and stop driving. Your insurance will no longer be valid if you continue to drive.
It may be possible that DVLA will allow a return to driving if your double vision is controlled, for example with a prism or patch. Double vision can, in some cases, be corrected with a prism. If your double vision has been corrected with a prism, you must inform DVLA of this treatment and wait for approval before driving.

In some exceptional cases, some people are allowed to return to driving if their double vision is stable and the driver has adapted well to it.

Double vision can also be corrected with eye patch. If using a patch, you must have adapted to looking through one eye. You will require clinical confirmation of successful adaptation to wearing an eye patch.

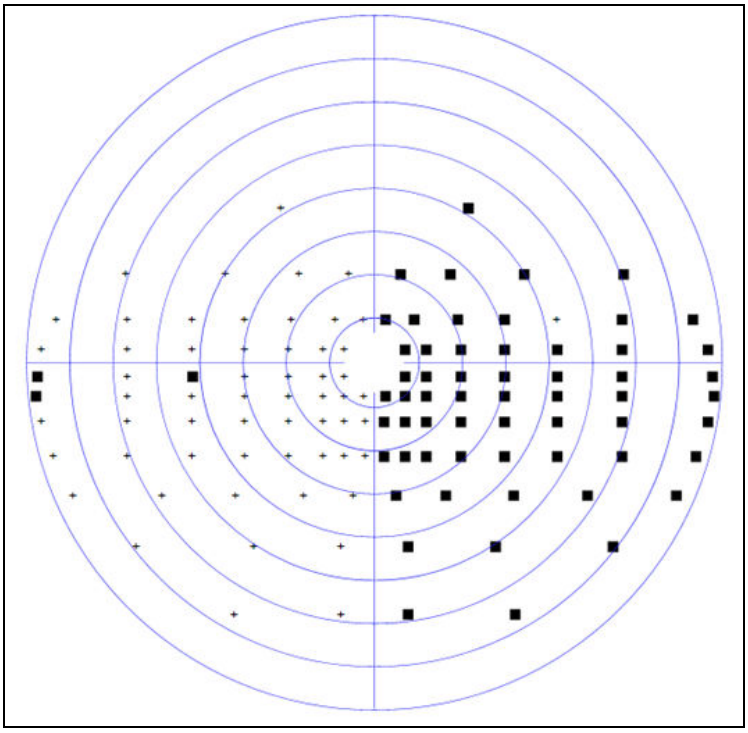
Visual field required to drive a car?

If you have a significant visual field loss with both eyes open, you cannot drive.

Group 1 car visual field requirements:

- Visual field must be at least 120 degrees wide, with at least 50 degrees of this being to each side.
- No significant visual field defect in the central 20-degree area.

In some exceptional cases, some people with significant visual field loss can request a specialist on-road driving assessment to be considered for a return to driving. These people must be at least one-year post-stroke, have a stable visual field defect and have adapted well to their loss of peripheral vision.



What if my visual perception has been affected?

If you struggle to recognise or make sense of what you see, you cannot drive. If you have been diagnosed with visual inattention or difficulty in concentration to one side, you cannot drive.

Where can I find more information about driving after stroke or brain injury?

Additional help and advice is available from:

British and Irish Orthoptic Society

Website: www.orthoptics.org.uk

The Stroke Association

Website: www.stroke.org.uk

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Website:www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing -agency

Headway

Website: www.headway.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

This leaflet was made by the Stroke and Neurological Rehabilitation Clinical Advisory Group in July 2021.

see www.orthoptics.org.uk/ for more information