# Monocular vision (sight in one eye)

This factsheet offers advice to people who have sight loss in one eye and answers some commonly asked questions.

## Time to adjust

It is perfectly normal to need some time to adjust to losing the sight in one of your eyes – both emotionally and practically.

When you lose vision in one eye it’s common to experience some uncomfortable symptoms as your visual system adjusts to this new way of seeing.

You’ll only be using one eye instead of using both eyes as a pair. This can initially cause some problems for people with things like depth perception (judging steps or correctly gauging how to pour liquid into a cup for example) and not having the field of vision on the affected side that you are used to (what you can see to the sides when looking straight ahead).

If the sight loss is not complete, it may also cause things to appear less clear, as the poor sight in the affected eye can 'interfere' with vision from the good eye.

People can also find that their eyes can become tired sometimes after very little effort as the eyes are trying to work to make the best of the remaining vision. You can continue using your good eye for activities such as reading or watching television; it won’t damage your eyes. However, you may find it helpful to take regular breaks from these tasks to prevent your eyes from becoming tired or fatigued.

In the main, the solution to these problems is a natural adjustment which happens over time. Our brains are very adaptable and able to adjust to this change in vision. Usually people find that with time their good eye ‘takes over’ and that tasks that were previously difficult become easier. It’s very difficult to say how long this adjustment will take as this is very individual. However, once someone has adjusted to monocular vision, they find that they are able to read, watch television and perform many day to day activities without any problems.

## Practical tips

Here are a few ideas that you may find useful to incorporate into things you do every day.

* When putting a drink down, place the other hand on the table or surface, then place the drink next to it.
* When pouring liquid, gently rest the lip of the container on the rim of the cup or glass.
* It can be difficult to judge the last step on the staircase. Move cautiously, feel ahead with your foot and keep a hand on the banister or handrail.
* You may find it useful when crossing the road, to stop at the kerb for a while to gauge the depth of the kerb and the distance of vehicles before crossing.
* Let friends and family know that it is easier for you if they walk or sit next to you on the side where you can see.
* In crowded areas, some people find that walking with a partner or against a wall on their affected side prevents them from bumping into other obstacles.
* You may find you have to turn your head more to see things towards your affected side.

## Can I still drive?

You may still be able to drive a car or motorcycle if you have monocular vision if your other eye has good enough vision to meet the legal standards set by the DVLA, and you have adapted to the sight loss in one eye.

Your ability to judge distances accurately may be affected and you may be less aware of objects on the side that has lost vision. Making better use of your wing mirrors will help. You will also need to bear in mind that blind spots caused by your car’s design will be larger for you if you only have vision in one eye.

For complete loss of vision in one eye (where there is no perception of light in the affected eye), the driver:

* **must meet the same visual acuity and visual field standards as binocular drivers (drivers with sight in both eyes).** This means that with your unaffected eye you must be able to read a number plate from 20 metres and read down to the 6/12 line (or better) on the eye test letter chart with any glasses or contact lenses you need. Your unaffected eye must also have good all-round field of vision.
* **may drive only after clinical advice of successful adaptation to the condition.** This means that you should not drive until you have been advised by your doctor or optometrist (optician) that you have fully adapted to monocular vision.

Any driver with monocular vision must notify the DVLA if they fail to meet these requirements. Your ophthalmologist (hospital eye doctor) or optometrist will be able to advise you further about these requirements and let you know whether you need to notify the DVLA.

If you hold a Heavy Goods Vehicle or Public Service Vehicle licence, the rules and requirements are different, and you must let the DVLA or DVA know about your monocular vision. You will probably need to complete a V1V form which can be found on the DVLA website or contact details for the DVA in Northern Ireland can be found on the DVA website.

RNIB cannot give permission for you to carry on driving. If you have any doubt about whether you can meet the visual requirements for driving, your GP, optometrist or ophthalmologist will be able to advise you.

## Can I register as partially sighted (“sight impaired”)?

Many people who have sight in only one eye consider themselves partially sighted. However, an eye consultant will not be able to **certify** you as “Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted” because you would not meet the criteria unless you also have a significant loss of sight in your other eye. This is because both eyes need to be affected by loss of vision in order to meet the criteria for certification. The criteria for certification and registration are set nationally by the Department of Health and applied at the discretion of a consultant ophthalmologist.

If you have some loss of sight in your other eye as well then it is worth discussing the possibility of registration with your ophthalmologist. For more details about registration, see our leaflet “Benefits, concessions and registration” available free of charge from our Helpline. Call **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

## Looking after the sight in your good eye

It’s important for people who have good sight in only one eye to have regular eye examinations with an optometrist so that the health of the eye they rely on can be monitored. Your optometrist should let you know how often you need to have your eyes examined.

For people who have sight in only one eye, it may be a good idea to consider the use of protective eyewear or sports goggles for certain sports or activities, such as gardening or DIY, to prevent injury to the good eye. You can speak to a dispensing optician at your local optician practice for more advice about this. Dispensing opticians are qualified in the dispensing and fitting of eyewear and can give professional advice about suitable protective frames and lenses.

## Sources of support

If you have questions about anything you’ve read in this factsheet, or just want to speak to someone about your eye condition, please get in touch with us. We’re here to support you at every step.

Our Helpline is your direct line to the support, advice and services you need. Whether you want to know more about your eye condition, buy a product from our shop, join our library, find out about possible benefit entitlements, or be put in touch with a trained counsellor, we’re only a call away.

It’s also a way for you to join RNIB Connect, our community for anyone affected by sight loss. RNIB Connect is free to join and you’ll have the chance to meet other people with similar experiences in our helpful, welcoming and supportive community.

Give us a call today to find out how we can help you.

**RNIB Helpline**

**0303 123 9999**

**helpline@rnib.org.uk**

We’re ready to answer your call Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9.30am to 1pm.

You can also get in touch by post or by visiting our website:

**RNIB**

105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

rnib.org.uk

## Other useful organisations

The **Artificial Eyes** website provides some useful information on adapting to monocular vision which may be helpful for people who have lost sight in one eye on the following page:

https://artificialeyes.net/adjusting-to-eye-loss-mind-map/adapting-to-monocular-vision/

## We value your feedback

You can help us improve our information by letting us know what you think about it. Is this factsheet useful, easy to read and detailed enough – or could we improve it?

Send your comments to us by emailing us at eyehealth@rnib.org.uk or by writing to the Eye Health Information service, RNIB, 105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE.

All of our factsheets are available in a range of formats including print, audio and braille.

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