

# Visual Inattention/Neglect Following a Stroke

## Patient Information

Orthoptic Department

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## What is visual inattention?

This is a common occurrence following a stroke in which the patient ignores everything on one side. Even when the patient's attention is drawn towards that side, their attention quickly reverts to forgetting that the side exists.

This condition may occur with or without a visual field defect (sight loss to one side).

A person with visual inattention will not be aware of anything or anyone on the **affected side**. So they may hear you but they will not be able to look at you until you move to their **non-affected side**. This can also result in a patient only eating one half of the food on their plate, or missing half of a page when reading. Because the brain is unaware that the **affected side** exists the patient is unaware that something is wrong, so they may deny that they have a problem.

Visual inattention/neglect can vary in intensity from being mild to very severe. Visual inattention can affect a person's ability to walk, drive or read and all aspects of self-care.

## Advice and treatment

The aim of treatment is to encourage the person to be aware of the **affected side** as much as possible.

The Orthoptist will try scanning and reading exercises with the patient. The other therapists and nurses on the rehabilitation ward will also try to make the patient more aware of their **affected side**.

Carers or relatives can also help by approaching the patient from their **affected side** and sit on this side to encourage the patient to turn to the **affected side**. If the patient becomes agitated or upset because they are unable to see people, then carers or relatives should sit on their **non-affected side** so they can be seen.

Objects should be placed on the **affected side** and the patient should be told of this so that they can try to locate the object on this side. However, if the condition is severe, you may be advised to put all objects on the **non-affected side**, to prevent any accidents.

When reading, it is worthwhile putting a **red mark** down each side of the page so that the patient is aware that they have to read from one red line to another.

It is important to try to keep up with the treatment and advice after the patient has been discharged.

## If you wish to speak to someone by phone please contact the Orthoptic Department:

Entrance B, Second Floor, Wigan Health Centre, Frog Lane, Wigan, WN6 7LB, Telephone Number: 01942 822310

Outpatient Department, Leigh Infirmary, Telephone Number: 01942 264095

Please use this space to write notes/reminders.

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust  
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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in department/ward.

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