

Floater and flashes

Flashes of light or black floaters that look like spiders or tadpoles are quite commonly seen by people with normal eyes.

They occur because of changes in the vitreous jelly, which lies directly in front of the retina. Any changes in the vitreous jelly can give rise to the appearance of floaters, but do not usually lead to any serious problems. No treatment is therefore necessary.

Separation or detachment of the vitreous from the retina is a common phenomenon, particularly in those aged over 50. In 90% of patients this is an entirely innocent change, with no damage to the retina.

Posterior vitreous detachment

In early life, the vitreous jelly which fills the eye is loosely attached to the surface of the **retina**, the innermost layer of the eye, formed of nerve cells and fibres. In middle-age (or earlier in those who are short-sighted) the vitreous jelly liquefies and pulls away from the retina, causing flashing lights and large floating spots, often spidery in shape. These changes can occur quite quickly.

Vitreous detachment is a once-in-a-lifetime event, and the vitreous cannot become reattached. Often floaters will persist but become less noticeable with time, as the brain becomes used to their presence and adapts to them, filtering them out.



Retinal detachment

Very rarely, the pulling of the jelly on the retina produces a **retinal tear**, which may cause a serious condition called **retinal detachment**.

This may cause a large shower of new floaters across the vision, and a 'curtain' of missing vision at the edge of your vision.



normal vision



with retinal detachment

Your doctor has performed a very thorough examination of your eye, and has found no evidence of retinal detachment. Therefore no treatment is necessary.

If things change, you should contact the eye clinic by telephoning the number on the back of this leaflet. Changes to look out for include:

- A sudden 'shower' of new floaters
- New flashing or growing lights in the corner of your vision
- A 'curtain' of missing vision
- A change or increase in the flashing lights

If these changes are sudden or pronounced, you should attend the A&E department without delay.



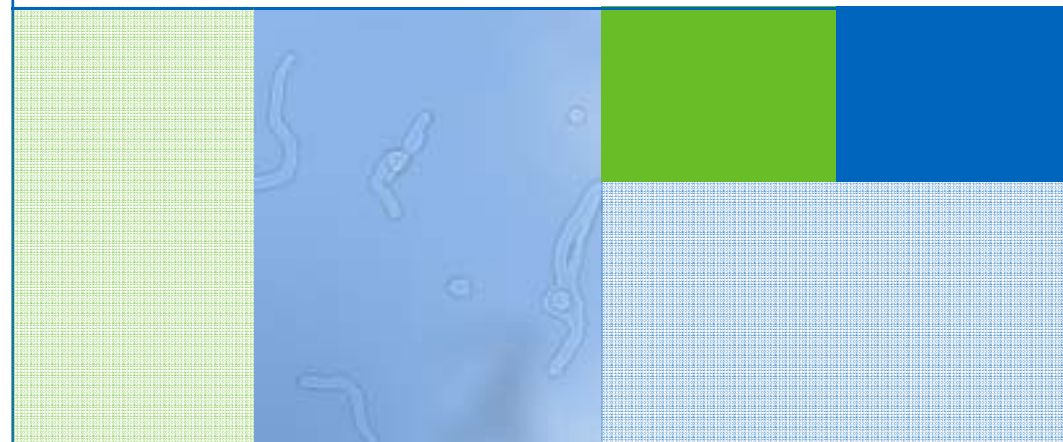
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Ophthalmology

Flashes, Floaters & Posterior Vitreous Detachment



Information for patients

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