



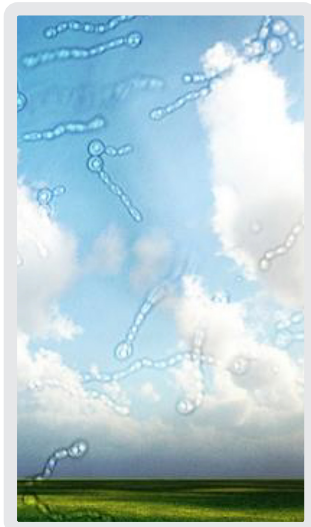
Flashes, Floaters and Posterior Vitreous Detachment

What are flashes?

- Flashes are bright sparks or strands of light, often seen at the edge of your vision.
- Typically flashes are caused when vitreous gel (the clear jelly-like substance which fills most of the eye) collapses and shrinks with age. As the gel collapses it pulls on the retina, creating bright flashes.

What are floaters?

- Floaters are clumps or irregularities that form in the vitreous gel as we get older. These floaters cast a shadow on the retina and are seen as spots, lines or cobwebs.
- Floaters will move as the eye moves. They appear to dart away when you try to look directly at them and continue to drift slowly when the eye stops moving. Floaters tend to be more visible when looking at something bright like a computer screen.
- Floaters are common and are more likely to occur as people get older.
- Around one in four people will have floaters by age 60. People who are short-sighted are more likely to develop floaters and will more often get them at an earlier age.
- There are a number of other causes of floaters. The only way to be sure is to have an examination by an eye specialist.

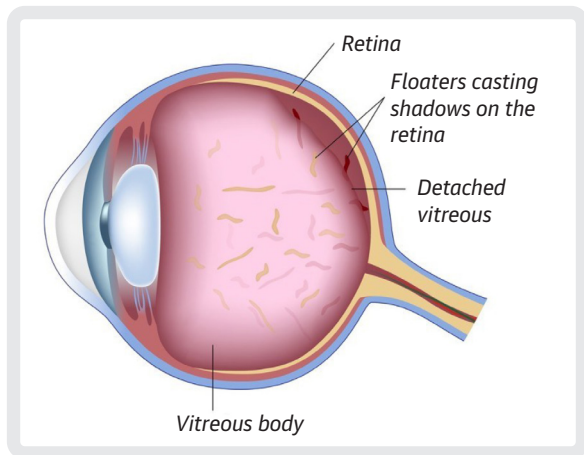


Causes of floaters

- Physiological/benign floaters (vitreous syneresis)
- Posterior Vitreous Detachment
- Retinal Tear
- Retinal Detachment
- Inflammation in vitreous (intermediate or posterior uveitis)
- Bleeding in the vitreous (e.g. from diabetes)

What is Posterior Vitreous Detachment (PVD)?

- PVD occurs as part of the natural ageing process when the vitreous gel collapses to the point that it pulls away from the retina.
- PVD is a one-off event that happens to almost everyone, usually after the age of 50. This is the most common cause of flashes and floaters.
- It may occur at a younger age in people who are short-sighted (myopic) or who have had surgery or an injury to the eye. Although most people who develop PVD suffer no damage to the eye the only way to be sure is to have an examination by an eye specialist.
- In particular, the eye specialist will look for a retinal tear or retinal detachment, which are sight-threatening conditions requiring urgent treatment.



What do I need to watch out for if I've had Posterior Vitreous Detachment (PVD)?

For most people, one examination with an specialist is all that is required to ensure the PVD hasn't caused serious damage, such as retinal tear or detachment. In some cases, the specialist may arrange another exam to be completely certain there is no damage.

Even if no damage is found at your exam it is important you make an urgent appointment with your eye specialist if you notice:

- Sudden occurrence of new floaters
- An enlarging shadow in your peripheral vision
- Sudden blurred vision.

Will my flashes and floaters improve?

For most people, flashes and floaters caused by PVD will improve over time. Flashes may continue for many months, especially in dim light, and are nothing to be concerned about. Floaters will usually remain visible in certain lighting conditions, such as a bright computer screen or blue sky. For most people this is not considered a problem, only mildly annoying.

What can I do if my floaters don't improve and are affecting my vision?

Floaters which persist for more than three months and interfere with the central vision can seriously affect normal daily activities. In this case you may benefit from treatment. There are two options to be discussed with your Ophthalmologist. These are:

- **YAG Laser Vitreolysis:** A clinic procedure using a laser to remove the floaters.
- **Vitrectomy:** A surgical procedure to completely remove all the vitreous gel and floaters.

What to remember

- Anyone with new flashes, floaters, or a sudden change in floaters requires an urgent eye examination to check for damage to the retina.
- Most people with flashes and floaters have no damage to the retina. Symptoms will improve with time.
- Even if no damage to the retina is initially detected another eye examination will be required if floaters change, a dark shadow appears in the peripheral vision, or vision becomes blurred.
- If floaters persist, or interfere with daily activities, treatment options such as YAG Laser Vitreolysis and Vitrectomy surgery are available.

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