



Eyecare because we care

# Flashes & Floaters

---

# Flashes & Floaters

---

## WHAT ARE FLOATERS?

Floaters are little pieces of debris which float about inside the jelly (vitreous) substance within your eye.

They appear as small dark or transparent spots, lines or cobwebs floating in front of your eyes. They are usually noticed when looking at a plain surface such as a white wall or a clear blue sky.

Floaters are common, even in healthy eyes, particularly as you get older, if you suffer from short-sightedness or have had a form of eye surgery. Floaters can be a nuisance but the brain can learn to ignore them and treatment is not advised.

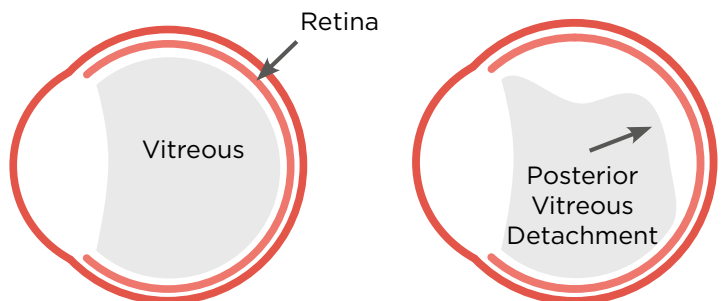
---

---

## WHAT ARE FLASHES?

Flashes occur when there is a pull on your retina (light sensitive layer at the back of the eye). This can cause flashes of light at the edge of your vision. These differ from the disturbance of vision that can occur with migraine, which often is in both eyes lasting typically 10-20 minutes and can be followed by a headache.

Sometimes the jelly (vitreous) substance which fills the eyeball can shrink as we age and tug on the retina (causing flashes). This is called a Posterior Vitreous Detachment and is a common occurrence in later life, which doesn't require treatment.



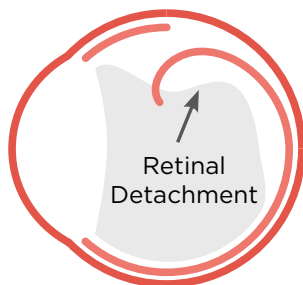
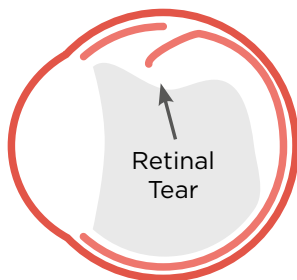
---

## WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

If you suddenly notice a shower of new floaters, or floaters together with flashes, or a shadow/“curtain” across your vision, then you should seek advice urgently. These symptoms could mean that the retina is tearing.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE RETINA TEARS?

The retina is at the back of the eye. It receives images and sends them to the brain. If there is a tear, then fluid can get underneath and the retina can detach – rather like wallpaper peeling off a damp wall. This can result in partial or complete loss of vision.



---

## WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM RETINAL DETACHMENT?

Detachment of the retina is quite uncommon and only 1 person in 10,000 is affected.

Factors increasing your risk:

- Recent eye surgery
- Moderately short sighted ( $>-3.00D$ )
- Eye injury
- Family History of Retinal Detachment
- Over 50 years old
- Certain General Health conditions

*Retinal detachment does not happen as a result of straining your eyes.*

## WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR RETINAL DETACHMENT?

A tear can be treated by using a laser, but if your retina has become detached you may need surgery.

The sooner the retinal tear/detachment is treated the better chance of visual recovery.

---

---

## LOOK OUT FOR THESE SYMPTOMS:

- **Flashes or floater(s) getting worse**
- **A dark “curtain” or shadow in your vision**
- **A sudden cloud of spots**
- **Any sudden loss of vision**

If any of these symptoms occur contact your Optometrist immediately.

Out with opening hours contact NHS24 or go to your local Accident and Emergency department if necessary.

Prompt treatment can often minimise the damage to your eye.

---