



Floater and Flashing Lights in the Field of Vision

Patient Information Leaflet

Ophthalmic Day Surgical Unit

01253 957420



Options available

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01253 955588

Our Four Values:

People Centred

Positive

Compassion

Excellence

Floaters and Flashing Lights in the Field of Vision

What are floaters?

Floaters are like “cobwebs” or specks that float about in your field of vision. They are small, dark, shadowy shapes that can look like spots, thread-like strands, or squiggly lines. They seem to move as your eyes move, and usually drift a little bit.

Floaters occur when the vitreous slowly shrinks (Vitreous = a gel-like substance that fills the back part of the eye). As the vitreous shrinks, it becomes somewhat stringy, and the strands can cast tiny shadows on the retina. These appear as “floaters”.

In most cases, floaters are part of the natural ageing process and do not signify anything serious. They can be annoying at first, but eventually tend to “settle” at the bottom of the eye. They become less noticeable with time, but do not go away completely. They can become apparent when looking at something like a plain wall or the sky.

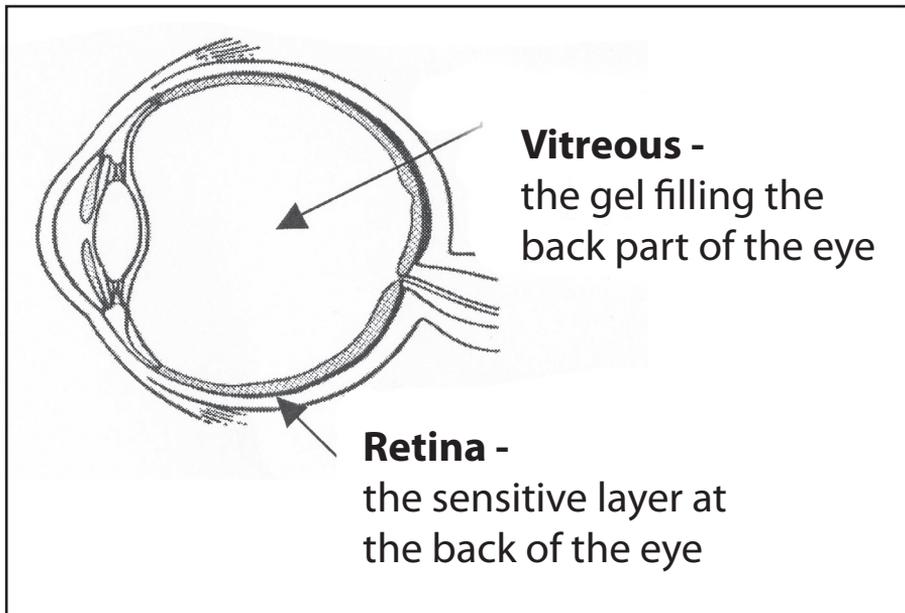
What are flashing lights?

Sometimes the vitreous, suddenly pulls away from the retina (Retina = the sensitive layer at the back of the eye). This causes many new floaters to appear suddenly, often accompanied by flashes of light. The flashes may appear like a sudden flash of a camera or a momentary arc of light. They occur because of the vitreous tugging or rubbing on the retina.

What is vitreous detachment?

When the vitreous-gel filling the back of the eye separates from the light sensitive layer called the retina, it is called a “vitreous detachment”. In most cases this is not sight-threatening and requires no treatment. However, a sudden increase in floaters, or new floaters, possibly accompanied by light flashes or loss of side vision, could indicate a retinal tear or retinal detachment.

A retinal detachment occurs when any part of the retina, is lifted away from its normal position on the back wall of the eye. A retinal detachment is a serious condition and should be considered an emergency. If left untreated, it can lead to permanent visual impairment or even blindness.



1. **Sudden increase in floaters or new floaters** accompanied by
2. **Flashing lights** and/or
3. **Curtains across the vision or loss of side vision,**

Please contact your Doctor/Optician as soon as possible, who will refer you to the eye department urgently.

If out of hours you are strongly advised to attend your local Accident and Emergency department.



Useful contact details

Ophthalmic Day Surgical Unit
01253 957420

Hospital Switchboard: **01253 300000**

Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives. You can contact them via:

Tel: **01253 955589**

email: **patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk**

You can also write to us at:

**Patient Relations Department, Blackpool Victoria Hospital,
Whinney Heys Road, Blackpool FY3 8NR**

Further information is available on our website: **www.bfwh.nhs.uk**

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

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