

## What are flashes and floaters?

People with normal eyes commonly see flashes of light or black 'floaters' which look like spiders or tadpoles. These 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.

Separation or detachment of the vitreous from the retina is a common phenomenon. In most patients this is an entirely harmless change with no damage to the retina. Vitreous detachment is an once-in-a-lifetime event and the vitreous cannot become reattached. Often the floaters will persist but become less noticeable with time.

## What do I need to do now?

When you were examined today, there was no sign of any damage to the eye, and no treatment was considered necessary. However, if the flashes or floaters become worse, you should go to your local A&E to exclude any serious problems.

## When should I be concerned?

If you suddenly notice a shower of new floaters, or new floaters along with flashes or a dark shadow or 'curtain' in your vision, then you should seek advice urgently. These symptoms can mean that the retina is tearing.

Go to an Accident and Emergency Department without delay if you notice any of these symptoms:

- flashes or floaters getting worse or change shape
- black shadow in your vision
- a sudden cloud of spots
- a curtain or veil over your vision
- any sudden loss of vision

## What will happen if the retina tears?

The retina is at the back of your eye. It receives the images and sends them to the brain. This is one of the things that enable you to see. If the retina tears, it may come away from the back wall of the eye. This is called **retinal detachment**. It can result in partial or complete loss of vision.

## How is retinal detachment treated?

A tear may be treated by using a laser. If treated quickly, you may have a better chance of full recovery. However, if your retina has become detached, you will need surgery.

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Corneo-Plastic Unit

