

Floaters & Flashes

Occasionally, small dots, lines or 'cobwebs' may float into our vision. When this happens very often, and is accompanied by flashes of light in your vision, the condition may be more serious.

What are floaters and flashes and how do I know if I have them?

Floaters are flying lines or dots that you may sometimes see moving in your field of vision. You usually see floaters when you are looking at a plain bright background, such as a blue sky.

Flashes are illusions of flashing lights or lightning streaks. Flashes may appear on and off for several weeks or months.

Causes

Floaters are caused by tiny clumps of gel or cellular debris inside the vitreous (a jelly-like fluid) that fills the inside cavity of the eye. The floaters appear to be in front of the eye but they are actually floating in the vitreous fluid inside the eye. They

cast their shadows on the retina, the light-sensing inner layer of the eye. Moving your eyes up and down creates currents within the vitreous and moves the floaters away from your direct line of vision.

Floaters result from the normal ageing process when the vitreous fluid degenerates. Flashes also result from the normal ageing process and are usually not a cause for worry.

Floaters and flashes are only a matter for concern if the degenerated vitreous pulls away from the retina and tears it. This can cause bleeding in the eye, and may appear as new floaters. Severe retinal tearing may develop into a retinal detachment, causing vision loss. Therefore, it is important to see your eye doctor when you see a sudden onset of many new floaters or flashes.

Prevention

Floaters and flashes are caused by ageing and cannot be prevented. However, you should always maintain good eye health and have your eyes checked regularly.

Treatment

There is no treatment or cure for floaters or flashes. They usually diminish over time but will not disappear.



Floaters.