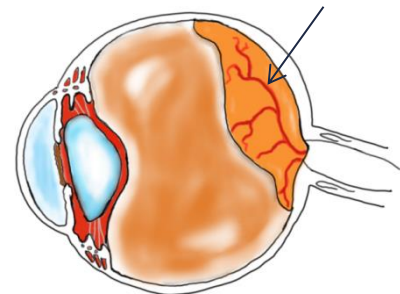


Patient information: accident and emergency

Information for patients with flashes and floaters

Flashes of light or black floaters that look like spiders or tadpoles are quite commonly seen by people with normal eyes. They 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 does not usually lead to any serious problems. No treatment is therefore necessary.

Posterior vitreous detachment



Separation or detachment of the vitreous from the retina is a common phenomenon, particularly in people over 50 years of age. In 90% of patients this is an entirely harmless change with no damage to the retina. Vitreous detachment is a once in a lifetime event and the vitreous cannot be reattached. Often, the floaters will persist but become less noticeable with time.

Flashes and floaters usually remain the same or get better. If they are troublesome, the effect of floaters may be minimized by wearing dark glasses. This will especially help in bright sunlight or when looking at a brightly lit surface.

When you were examined today, there was no sign of any damage to your eye and no treatment was considered necessary. You do not need to worry, but if the flashes or floaters become worse you should attend the A&E department to make sure there aren't any serious problems.

If you see a black shadow or curtain effect, or you suddenly lose vision please attend the A&E department without delay.

