



Posterior vitreous detachment

Information for patients from the Ophthalmology Department

What is a posterior vitreous detachment?

The vitreous is a transparent gel substance filling the back of the eye ball. With age the vitreous gel shrinks back and separates itself from part of the retina at the back of the eye.

What are the signs and symptoms?

You may notice black 'floaters' in your vision (sight) which move with your eye and then settle as your eye rests. You may also be aware of flashing lights, like little flickers on the outside of your vision. To look at, your eye appears normal.

What is the treatment?

There is no treatment needed for posterior vitreous detachment. The floaters are annoying but not serious. Although they do not usually go away, your brain learns to compensate for them so that they become less noticeable.

Until that happens, you can move them temporarily from your line of vision by moving your eyes from side to side and up and down. This creates a current within the vitreous gel that often pushes the floaters to the periphery (edges) of your vision.

The flashing lights should slowly settle over the next few days or weeks.

Retinal tear and retinal detachment

Less than one in 10 patients having a posterior vitreous detachment may suffer from a retinal tear in the future. This may progress to a retinal detachment which may need urgent surgery or laser treatment.

What are the possible warning signs of a retinal detachment?

You should be aware of the signs and symptoms of a retinal detachment. Contact your GP, optician, or Emergency Department as soon as possible if any of the following occur.

- A sudden increase in the number of floaters in your vision.
- New floaters.
- The flashing lights get worse or increase.
- Part of your visual field is missing.
- A 'curtain' coming across your vision.

Further information

For more information, please read the **Retinal detachment** leaflet. (/retinal-detachment)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

Reference number: Web 145

First published:
June 2004

Last reviewed:
June 2022

Next review date:
October 2025

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.