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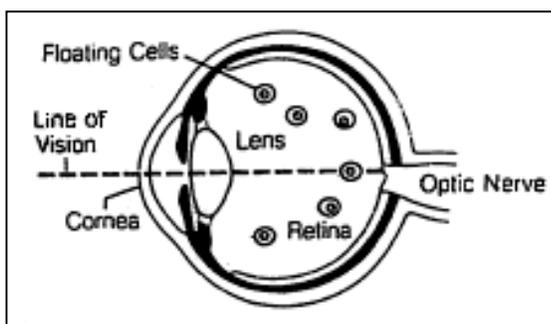
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Floaters and Flashes

The small specks or “bugs” that many people see moving in their field of vision are called *floaters*. They are frequently visible when looking at a plain background, such as a blank wall or blue sky. Floaters were described long ago, in Roman times, as flying flies (“muscae volitantes”).

Floaters are small clumps of gel that form in the *vitreous*, the clear jelly-like fluid that fills the inside cavity of the eye. Although they appear to be in front of the eye, they are actually floating in the fluid inside the eye and are seen as shadows by the *retina* (the light-sensing inner layer of the eye).

The appearance of floaters, whether in the form of little dots, circles, lines or cobwebs, may cause much concern especially if they develop suddenly; however, they are usually of little importance, representing an aging process. The vitreous gel shrinks with time, pulls away from the retina and causes floaters. This is especially common in nearsighted people or after a cataract operation.



Should You Be Concerned?

Are Floaters Ever Serious?

As the vitreous gel pulls away, the retina may be torn, sometimes causing a small amount of bleeding in the eye which may appear as a group of new floaters. If this tear becomes a retinal detachment it can be serious. Uncommonly, floaters result from inflammation within the eye or from crystal-like deposits which form in the vitreous gel.

What Can Be Done About Floaters?

Floaters may sometimes interfere with clear vision, often when reading, and can be quite annoying. IF a floater appears directly in your line of vision, the best thing to do is to move your eye around, which will cause the inside fluid to swirl and allow the floater to move out of the way. We are most accustomed to moving our eyes back and forth, but looking up and down will cause different currents within the eye and may be more effective in getting the floaters out of the way.

INFORMATION ON RETINAL DETACHMENT

You have been identified as being at risk for developing a retinal detachment. Please read this information carefully.

The retina is a delicate tissue that lines the back of the eye and allows you to see. A retinal detachment occurs when the retina becomes separated from the underlying tissue.

There are a number of conditions that increase the risk of retinal detachment. They include moderate to high myopia (nearsighted), blunt or penetrating injury to the eye, peripheral retinal degenerations, and heredity. You should be aware of the symptoms of a retinal detachment, and maintain a schedule of periodic eye examinations.

A retinal detachment is an emergency. If prompt surgical treatment is provided, permanent vision loss can be prevented. Should you experience any of the symptoms listed below, seek care immediately. If you are unable to reach an eye doctor directly, then proceed to a local hospital emergency room.

SYMPTOMS OF RETINAL DETACHMENT

Seeing Flashing Lights followed by:

Loss of Side Vision

Seeing a “Shower of Dots”

Seeing a Veil or Curtain Over Your Vision (this may develop suddenly or over a period of hours)

There Is No Pain Associated with a Retinal Detachment

YOU MUST Contact our office immediately if you experience these symptoms; if it is outside our office hours’ visit your nearest emergency room. (If possible within a 24 hour period)

SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL OUR OFFICE.