

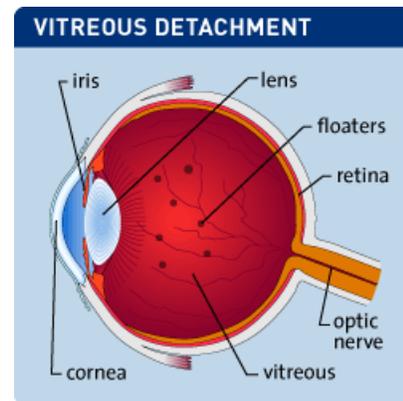
## What are floaters?

Floaters are debris that is in the Vitreous Humor of the eye that seem to float around when you move your eye. They can look like little black or gray specks, cobwebs, small dark shapes that look like spots, thread-like strands, or squiggly lines in various shapes and densities. They can follow your eye movements precisely and may continue to drift when your eyes stop moving.

Many floaters are caused by age-related changes that occur to the Vitreous Humor or jelly-like substance inside your eye. Clumps of debris float around within the vitreous cavity, and they can cast tiny shadows on your retina, which you may see as floaters.

## Causes and Risk Factors

Generally, most people who have floaters learn to ignore them even though they can become a nuisance. They are usually not noticed until they become numerous or more prominent.



If you notice a sudden change or increase in the number of floaters you see, or if you see flashes of light coming from inside your eye or your vision has become hazy, call your eye doctor right away. This may be a sign of something serious happening, such as a retinal tear, or retinal detachment beginning.

## Floaters and Retinal Detachment

Sometimes a section of the vitreous pulls the fine fibers away from the retina all at once, rather than gradually, causing many new floaters to appear suddenly. This is called a vitreous detachment, which in most cases is not sight-threatening and requires no treatment.

However, a sudden increase in floaters, possibly accompanied by light flashes or peripheral (side) vision loss, could indicate a retinal detachment. A retinal detachment occurs when any part of the retina, the eye's light-sensitive tissue, is lifted or pulled from its normal position at the back wall of the eye.

A retinal detachment is a serious condition and should always be considered an emergency. If left untreated, it can lead to permanent visual impairment or even blindness in the effected eye. Those who experience a sudden increase in floaters, flashes of light in peripheral vision, or a loss of peripheral vision should have an Ophthalmologist examine their eyes as soon as possible.

## Treatment

For people who have floaters that are simply annoying, no treatment is recommended. On rare occasions, floaters can be so dense and numerous that they significantly affect vision. In these cases, a vitrectomy, a surgical procedure that removes floaters from the vitreous, may be needed. This operation carries significant risks to sight because of possible complications, which include retinal detachment, retinal tears, and cataract. Most eye surgeons are reluctant to recommend this surgery unless the floaters seriously interfere with vision.