

Posterior Vitreous Detachment

What is it?

The vitreous is a gel like substance that fills the eye. From birth this gel is firmly attached to the retina, the film at the back of the eye, but with age the vitreous thins and may separate from the retina. This is called a posterior vitreous detachment. PVDs are most common more likely as people get older but can happen in the following cases: people that are myopic (short sighted), diabetic, person with prior eye surgery, family history of retinal detachments in family.



Why do I get floaters?

When the vitreous separates from the retina, some of it will clump up together and form a shadow on the retina that causes you to see floaters. This happens more often when looking at something bright, and the shadow effect is more obvious.

Why do I get flashing lights?

Strands of the vitreous gel that are attached to the retina can mildly rub on the retina which can stimulate the nerve fibres and cause you to see flashing lights.

What are the complications or risks?

One of the big risks is that as the vitreous pulls away from the retina, a small hole can form in the retina. If left untreated, the retina hole can in some cases lead to a detached retina, which may cause loss of vision, but 95 out of a 100 cases where patients have PVD, the vitreous separates harmlessly from the retina.

What can I do now?

The doctor who has seen you will check your retina to make sure that there are no signs of a retinal hole or detachment. However if you do have a problem with your retina like a retina hole or detachment, laser treatment or surgery will be needed, and this will be discussed with you separately. If the doctor concludes that there is no problem with your retina, then you will be discharged from the doctors office as usual. The floaters or flashes that you are experiencing will become less visible but may not disappear completely.