



Patient information: Accident and Emergency

Information for patients with flashes and floaters



What are flashers and floaters?

Flashes of light or black floaters that look like cobwebs or tadpoles are commonly seen by people with normal eyes. They occur because of changes in the vitreous jelly, which lies directly in front of the retina (the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye).

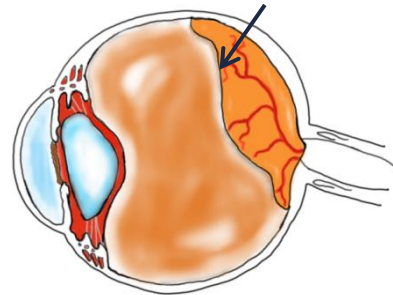
Why am I seeing flashes and floaters?

This is due to the separation of the jelly from the retina. This is a process known as posterior vitreous detachment.

This is a normal part of ageing of the eye, and typically occurs in people over the age of 50. It can sometimes occur earlier however, partially if you are short-sighted or have had recent eye surgery.

Posterior vitreous detachment is usually associated with the sudden appearance of new floaters and/or flashes of light. Some patients can see floaters for many years before the vitreous separation actually occurs.

Posterior vitreous detachment



Does a posterior vitreous detachment need treatment?

No. In 90% of patients this process is entirely harmless, and no treatment is required.

In about 1 in 10 people when the vitreous detaches, it can cause bleeding inside the eye or create a tear or detachment of the retina. These are sight-threatening changes that may require urgent treatment with laser or surgery.



Will my flashers and floaters go away?

Often, the floaters will persist but become gradually less noticeable, and any flashing usually settles with time.

When should I return to A&E?

You do not need to worry, but if the flashes or floaters suddenly become worse, you should attend the A&E department the following morning to make sure that there aren't any new problems at the back of the eye.

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

**Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust
City Road, London EC1V 2PD
Phone: 020 7253 3411
www.moorfields.nhs.uk**

Moorfields nurse-led helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye
conditions and treatments from
experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324 or 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, except bank holidays

Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right. For more information about your rights and responsibilities, please visit the Moorfields website and search 'Referrals to treatment (RTT)'. To learn more about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

