

Summary

Floater are dark specks or dots in your field of vision. They are shadows you see from clumps of vitreous gel in your eye. Flashes are flashes of light that look like lightning streaks in your field of vision. Flashes occur when the vitreous gel rubs or pulls on your retina. Floaters and flashes are quite common as people age. However, they can be a signs of a retinal detachment, which is a serious problem. If you notice change in your vision and a lot of floaters and flashes.

CALL YOUR OPHTHALMOLOGIST RIGHT AWAY!

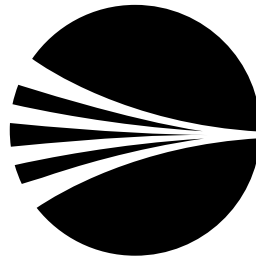
Vision loss is preventable

It's important to remember that many people do not know they have eye disease because there are often no warning signs or symptoms, or they assume that poor sight is a natural part of growing older.

Early detection and treatment of eye problems is the best way to keep your healthy vision throughout your life. In many cases, blindness and vision loss are preventable.

Adults with no signs or risk factors for eye disease get a baseline eye disease screening at age 40. For individuals at any age with symptoms of or at risk for eye disease, should see their ophthalmologist to determine how frequently their eye should be examined.

Compliments of
Vatsal Doshi, MD, MPH and
Jonathan Huz, MD of
**Vitreous Retina Macula Specialists
of New Jersey**



VRM NJ | VITREOUS RETINA MACULA
SPECIALISTS OF
NEW JERSEY

Millburn

306 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Millburn, NJ 07041
P (973) 467-2020
F (973) 467-2030

Somerset

1543 Route 27, Suite 12
Somerset, NJ 08873
P (732) 839-0516
F (732) 253-5259

W vrmnjretina.com

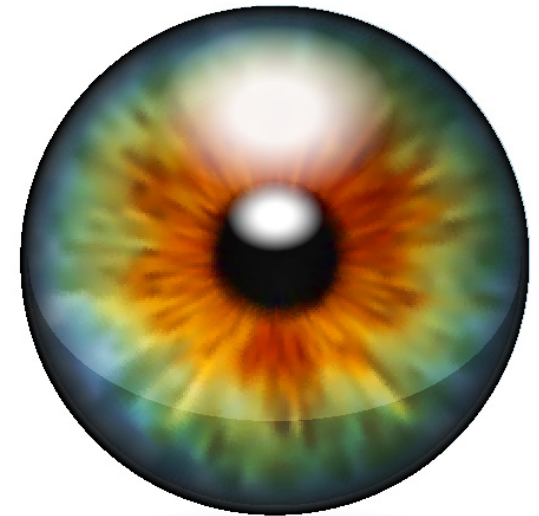
E retinamd@vrmnjretina.com



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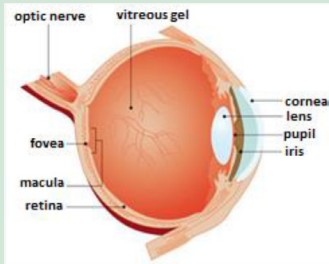
A Closer Look at ERM (Epiretinal Membrane)



Patient Education

What are floaters?

Floaters look like small specks, dots, circles, lines or cobwebs in your field of vision. While they seem to be in front of your eye, they are floating inside. Floaters are tiny clumps of gel or cells inside the vitreous that fills your eye. What you see are the shadows these clumps cast on your retina. You usually notice floaters



when looking at something plain, like a blank wall or blue sky.

Who is at risk for floaters?

Floaters are more likely to develop as we age and are more common in people who are very nearsighted, have diabetes or who have had cataract surgery.

Retina: Layer of the nerve cells lining the back wall inside the eye. This layer senses light and sends signals to the brain so you can see.

Vitreous: Clear, gel-like substance that fills the inside of your eye.

As we age, our vitreous starts to thicken or shrink. Sometimes clumps or strands form in the vitreous. If the vitreous pulls away from the back of the eye, it is called posterior vitreous detachment. Floaters usually happen with posterior vitreous detachment. They are not serious, and they tend to fade or go away over time. They seldom need treatment or surgery.

You are more likely to get floaters if you:

- Are nearsighted (you need glasses to see far away).
- Have had surgery for cataracts.
- Have had inflammation (swelling) inside the eye.

What are flashes?

Flashes can look like flashing lights or lightning streaks in your field of vision. Some people compare them to seeing “stars” after being hit on the head. You might see flashes on and off for a weeks, or even months. Flashes happen when the vitreous rubs or pulls on your retina.

As people age, it is common to see flashes occasionally.

Flashes and migraines

Sometimes people have light flashes that look like jagged lines or heat waves. These can appear in one or both eyes and may last up to 20 minutes. This type of flashes may be caused by a migraine. A migraine is a spasm of blood vessels in the brain.

When you get a headache after these flashes, it is called a “migraine headache.” But sometimes you only see the light flash without having a headache. This is called an “ophthalmic migraine” or “migraine without headache.”

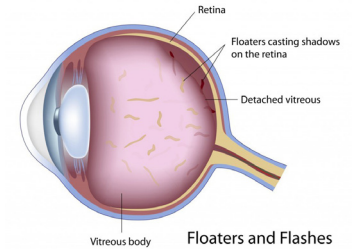
When floaters and flashes are serious?

Most floater and flashes are not a problem. However, there are times when they can be signs of a serious condition. Here is when you should call an ophthalmologist right away:

- you notice a lot of new floaters
- you have a lot of flashes
- a shadow appears in your peripheral (side) vision
- a gray curtain covers part of your vision

These floaters and flashes could be symptoms of a torn or detached retina.

This is when the retina pulls away from the back of your eye. This is a serious condition that needs to be treated.



Schedule an eye examination

People with diabetes and high blood pressure should schedule an examination at least once a year. Fluctuation in blood sugar can cause changes in both eyes. Remember that vision loss is preventable when detected early.

How are your eyes examined?

When your eyes are examined, they will be dilated using eye drops. During this examination, which is painless, your eye doctor will observe if there are any changes to your eye including the retina and vitreous.