

Staffordshire Eye Clinic

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Posterior Vitreous Detachment

The inside of the eye contains a jelly-like substance called the vitreous. This fills the inside of the eye pressing against the retina. With age the vitreous jelly changes and begins to turn into liquid. When this happens it pulls away from the retina and you will notice particles, floaters or a cobweb in the vision. There will sometimes be associated flashing lights. This process is very common and in the majority of cases, although annoying, is not serious.

If you notice flashes or floaters for the first time it is very important that you contact an ophthalmologist urgently to exclude an associated retinal tear. Unfortunately the jelly can occasionally pull on the retina and cause a retinal tear. Early laser treatment for a retinal tear can prevent retinal detachment. This is a potentially serious condition which could progress to a sight damaging retinal detachment.

In the majority of people the floaters fade over a few months and become less troublesome. In some patients the floaters persist, obscuring central vision and causing intermittent difficulty with reading.

Warning signs

You should contact an ophthalmologist promptly if:

- You notice a sudden rush of floaters
- A shadow or curtain appearing in the vision
- New flashing lights or a change in flashing lights

These signs are important warning signs of possible retinal detachment.