



AL-SHIFA TRUST EYE HOSPITAL

Flashes and Floaters

Flashes of light or black floaters that look like spiders or tadpoles and move around as you move your eye are quite commonly seen by people with normal eyes.

Causes of flashes and floaters

Flashes and floaters happen because of changes in the vitreous, the clear, jelly-like substance that fills the inside of your eyeball. The vitreous jelly shrinks as you get older, and slowly pulls away from the inside surface of the eye. This shrinking and separation or detachment of the vitreous from the retina is a common phenomenon, particularly in people over 50 years of age, and causes no retinal damage in nine out of 10 patients. It is known as a posterior vitreous detachment.

Treatment for flashes and floaters

Flashes and floaters rarely lead to any serious complications, so you generally don't need any treatment for them. If they are troublesome, the effect of floaters might be minimised by wearing dark glasses. This will help especially in bright sunlight or when looking at a brightly lit surface. In many cases, the flashes disappear with time and the floaters get less noticeable as your brain adjusts to the jelly change. If your flashes or floaters become much worse, you should consult your GP, your optometrist (optician) or visit our specialist A&E department to exclude any serious problems. If you see a black shadow or curtain effect or you suddenly lose vision, you should go to your nearest A&E without delay.

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