

# Posterior Vitreous Detachment

The most common cause of new onset flashing lights and floaters is Posterior Vitreous Detachment or PVD. The vitreous is a clear, gel-like material that fills the center of your eye. The vitreous shrinks and liquefies with time. As a result, the vitreous membrane eventually will detach from the retina. The retina is neurosensory tissue responsible for collecting your vision and sending it to your brain by way of the optic nerve. PVDs commonly occur in people later in life, after eye surgery, trauma, and for those that are nearsighted.

A detached vitreous will cast a shadow of floaters onto the retina. Most people will describe their floaters as a 'circle, half-moon, spider, or squiggly lines.' These floaters will usually start in the side of your vision, move to the center of your vision, and then move out again - mostly associated with eye movement.

Flashing lights also can occur with a PVD. A flash of light, usually in the peripheral part of your vision, represents traction or pulling on the retina. In a PVD, flashing lights often represent the remaining attached vitreous pulling on the peripheral part of your retina. Flashing lights are usually seen more in dark environments and with eye movement.

Surgery or laser to remove the floaters is usually not recommended because the risks usually outweigh the benefits. Most people will say they notice their floaters less with time. This occurs as your brain will start to ignore them in your vision. In cases where floaters remain to be symptomatic, they can be removed but require a surgery called a vitrectomy performed by a retina specialist.

Flashing lights and floaters can also represent a Retinal Tear or Retinal Detachment - a serious eye problem that can lead to irreversible vision loss. If you were diagnosed with a new onset PVD, you are slightly more at risk for experiencing a retinal tear/detachment in the near future. That is why it is imperative that anyone who experiences any new floaters (typically described as a shower of new floaters), flashing lights or painless shadow growing into their field of vision be evaluated again as soon as possible.

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