



# Flashes and Floaters

## Patient Information Sheet

### North Yorkshire Local Optometric Committee

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#### **What are floaters?**

Often, people who have healthy eyes see floaters. They appear as spots, lines or cobweb effects, usually when you look at a plain surface such as a white wall or a clear blue sky. They often appear when the clear jelly in the main part of your eye gets older.

#### **When should I be concerned about floaters and flashes?**

If you suddenly notice a shower of new floaters, or floaters together with flashing lights or a dark 'curtain' in your vision, then you should seek further advice urgently. These symptoms can mean that the retina is tearing. Go to an Accident and Emergency Department if necessary.

#### **Look out for:**

- flashes or floaters getting worse
- a black shadow in your vision
- a sudden cloud of spots
- a curtain or veil over your vision
- any sudden loss of vision.

### **What will happen if the retina tears?**

The retina is at the back of the eye. It receives the images and sends them to the brain. This is part of the process that is involved in 'seeing'. If the retina tears, it may strip away from the back wall of the eye. This is called **retinal detachment**. It can result in partial or complete loss of vision.

### **What is the treatment for retinal detachment?**

A tear may be treated by using a laser. If treated quickly you may have a better chance of full recovery. However, if your retina has become detached, you will need surgery. The operation may restore most of your vision but may come too late for a full recovery.

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