

FLASHES & FLOATERS

When to Seek Urgent Eye Assessment

Flashes and floaters are common symptoms, often caused by age-related changes in the vitreous gel. However, they can also be a warning sign of a retinal tear or retinal detachment, which needs urgent assessment.



EDGBASTON EYE CLINIC

Safe, Efficient & Patient Centred Care



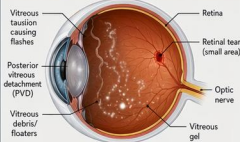
5 ★ RATED ON GOOGLE

1 CAUSES & RISK FACTORS

- Posterior vitreous detachment (PVD) – most common cause
- Ageing changes in the vitreous gel
- Short-sightedness (myopia)
- Previous cataract surgery
- Eye trauma
- Inflammation (e.g. uveitis)
- Vitreous haemorrhage
- Retinal tear or retinal detachment

i Most flashes and floaters are due to PVD, but new symptoms should always be assessed to exclude a retinal tear.

2 WHAT HAPPENS?



i As the vitreous gel separates from the retina, traction can cause flashes. Condensed vitreous strands or blood can appear as floaters. If traction creates a retinal tear, urgent treatment is needed.

3 COMMON SYMPTOMS

- ⚡ Flashes of light, often in the side vision
- 🕸️ Floaters – spots, cobwebs, threads or rings
- 📈 Sudden increase in floaters
- ☁️ Blurred or cloudy vision
- 🎭 A shadow or curtain in the vision
- 👁️ Reduced peripheral vision
- 🛡️ Sometimes mild discomfort, but often painless

⚠️ A new shower of floaters or a curtain/shadow is an urgent warning sign.

4 CLINICAL FINDINGS

- Posterior vitreous detachment
- Pigment cells or blood in the vitreous
- Peripheral retinal breaks
- Detached retina in more serious cases



Weiss ring



Vitreous haemorrhage



Retinal tear



Retinal detachment

i Retinal tears and detachments are sight-threatening and require prompt diagnosis.

5 ASSESSMENT AT EDGBASTON EYE CLINIC

- ✓ Full symptom history and visual assessment
- ✓ Dilated examination of the retina
- ✓ Keeler digital slit lamp examination
- ✓ Optos Daytona ultra-widefield retinal imaging
- ✓ OCT imaging if indicated
- ✓ Urgent referral pathway if retinal tear or detachment is suspected



i Ultra-widefield imaging helps assess the retina, including the far periphery.

6 MANAGEMENT / TREATMENT

A Uncomplicated PVD

- Usually requires observation and safety-net advice
- Symptoms often become less noticeable with time



B Retinal Tear

- Requires urgent same-day retinal specialist review
- Usually treated with laser retinopexy or cryotherapy



C Retinal Detachment

- Requires emergency hospital assessment
- May need urgent surgery



D Floaters

- Most do not need treatment
- Reassurance and monitoring are often appropriate



i The correct treatment depends on the cause — the priority is ruling out a retinal tear or detachment.

7 WHEN TO SEEK URGENT HELP



- ⚡ Sudden new flashes
- 🕸️ Sudden onset or marked increase in floaters
- 🎭 A curtain, veil or shadow in your vision
- 📺 Sudden drop in vision
- ☀️ Symptoms after eye injury
- 👁️ New symptoms in one eye, especially if highly myopic



Seek urgent same-day eye assessment if any of the above symptoms occur.

★ KEY POINTS



New flashes and floaters should never be ignored.



Early detection of a retinal tear can prevent retinal detachment and sight loss.



Prompt specialist assessment is the safest approach.

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