

FLOATERS

What Causes Floaters?

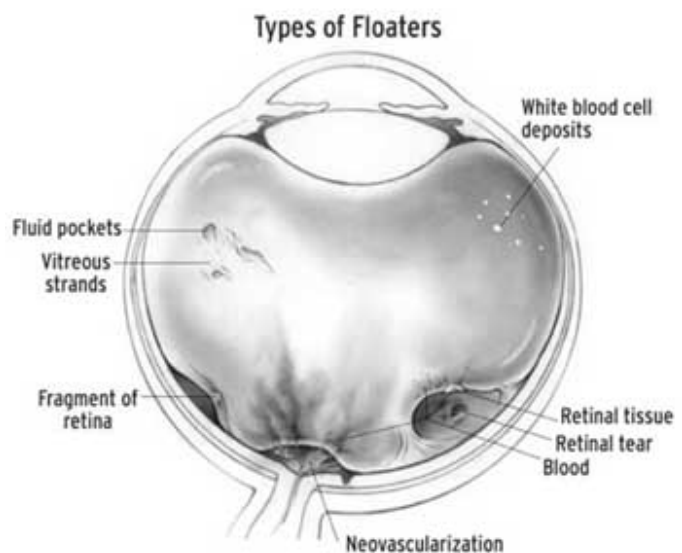


Symptoms

Floaters are spots in front of your vision, and just like clouds, they come in all shapes and sizes. They are seen best when looking at a white wall or blue sky. They may variously be described as spots, dots, cobwebs, worms, rings, or specks. They are more visible with eye movements which make them swirl around in front of your vision

We all have some floaters and some floaters are often normal. The sudden onset of new floaters though can often indicate a serious retinal problem like a retinal tear or bleeding in the eye and require urgent examination by a retinal specialist. In many cases the cause may be a simple age related vitreous detachment, in which case no intervention is required. Without a dilated retinal examination though it is impossible to rule out a vision threatening retinal tear or detachment and new floaters requires an urgent examination preferably either that day with your local optometrist if possible, who will help determine the urgency with which to arrange a referral to a retina specialist.

Other common causes of floaters are bleeding in the eye, due to diabetes or retinal vein occlusions for example and ocular inflammatory disorders. All of these require urgent evaluation.

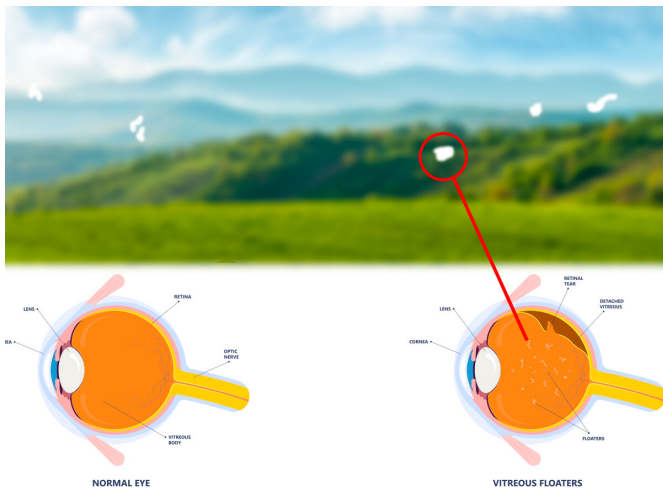
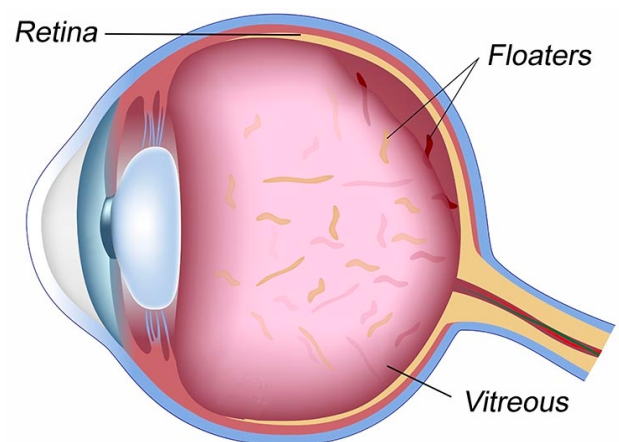


TREATMENT

If your doctor confirms your retina is normal and the floaters are not bothering you, then no treatment is required.

If your floaters are bothering you a lot and interfering with your vision, then it is certainly possible to remove them. It is always worth giving things time to settle first though, because after a few months, floaters can become less annoying and clear a little or move out of your central vision.

If your floaters have been present for a long time, with no improvement, then fortunately modern surgery can remove them with a 99% chance of success. The surgical technology to remove floaters has improved dramatically over the past ten years and many people who were told years ago that nothing could be done can now be helped. Modern vitrectomy has a 99% chance of successfully removing the floaters and less than a 1% chance of the floaters returning.



COMPLICATIONS

Floaters range in severity from mild and completely asymptomatic, to severe, causing significant difficulties with reading, driving and working.

Floaters by themselves do not damage the eye, but like clouds, they may cause shadowing of the retina beneath them, which can impair your vision. The underlying cause of the floaters however, if untreated can cause severe and potentially permanent damage, underlining the importance of a good ocular exam to evaluate for the cause of your floaters

