

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Torbay Hospital Vitreo-Retinal Service

## “Flashes and Floaters”

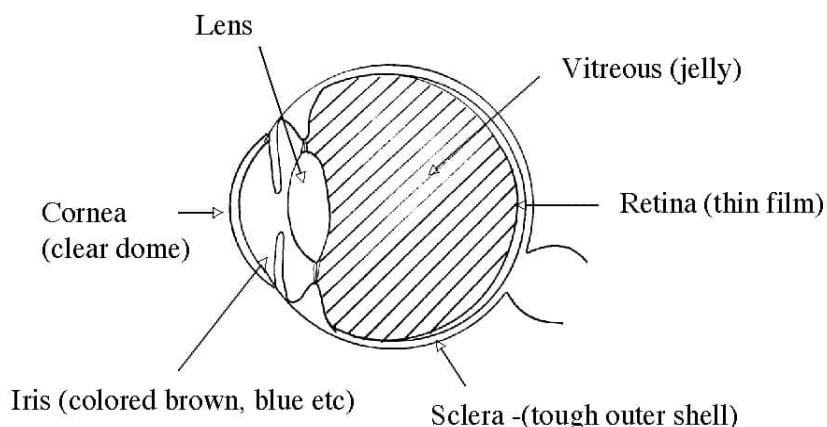
### What are Floaters?

Most of the space inside our eye is filled with a clear transparent jelly called vitreous.

When we are born, this vitreous jelly is uniform in consistency but as we get older the vitreous becomes more fluid with strands forming clumps within it.

These strands cast shadows onto the retina which we see as floaters. This process can happen earlier in people who are short-sighted (myopic).

Many normal eyes have these floaters; they appear as small specks or strands in your vision. Some people describe them as dots, circles, lines or cobwebs. Although they appear to be in front of your eyes they are in fact inside your eyes - floating in the vitreous.



### What are Flashes?

The vitreous jelly in our eyes lies next to the retina. The retina is a very thin film-like structure which lines the inside of the back of our eyes. It is responsible for converting the light that we see into an image. If we push or poke the retina it produces what we see as a flash of light.

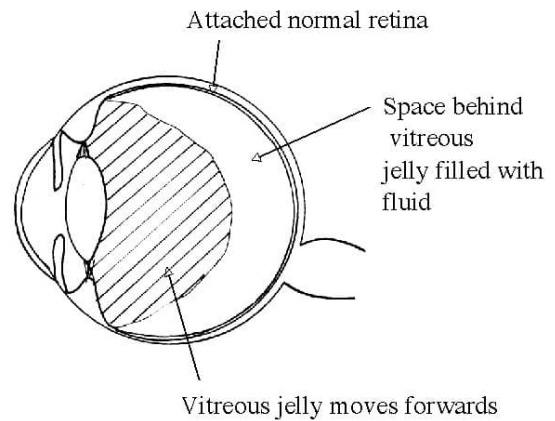
If the jelly inside our eyes pulls on the retina, we also see a flash of light.

### What causes a rush of Flashes and Floaters?

Over the age of approximately 50, people can develop a sudden rush of floaters associated with changes in the vitreous jelly inside their eye. The vitreous jelly moves forward inside the eye and in doing so the person becomes aware of lots of floaters. This is called a posterior vitreous detachment (PVD)

**This process is a normal ageing process and in the majority of cases causes no problems, but,** in some eyes it can be complicated by a tear or hole in the retina. This happens when attachments between the vitreous jelly and the retina are strong. This can lead to fluid accumulating under the retina through the hole or tear and may then cause a detachment of the retina (retinal detachment)

### Normal Ageing Vitreous Detachment



### Do I need treatment after a vitreous jelly detachment?

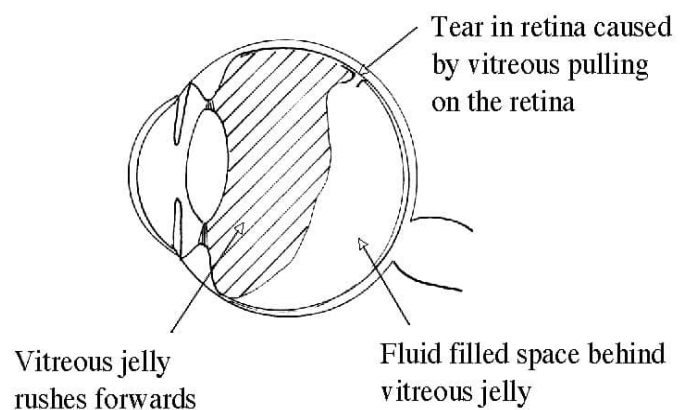
**In the vast majority of cases no treatment is necessary after a vitreous jelly detachment.**

Your doctor will examine your eyes thoroughly and if there are no signs of damage, weak areas or tears then you will be discharged.

Areas that have a hole or tear can be treated in the early stages with laser treatment. The laser is used to “spot weld” the retina around the break to try and prevent a retinal detachment.

If a retinal detachment has occurred then it can be treated with an operation to try to put the retina back in place to prevent permanent loss of vision.

### Vitreous Jelly Detachment with Retinal Tear



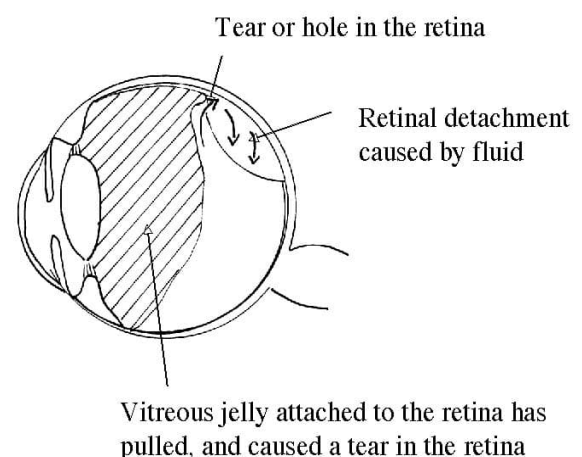
### Warning signs

If you develop a change in your symptoms or new symptoms you must contact the Eye Emergency team.

Warning signs are:

- 1) New Flashing lights**
- 2) New Floaters**
- 3) Shadow or curtain in the vision.**

### Retinal Detachment Caused by Retinal Tear



**If you develop warning signs or  
are concerned you can contact  
the, Eye Emergency Outpatient Department  
on Tel: ☎ 01803 655088 Option 5**

**(Monday-Friday 09.00-17.00)**

**Out of hours you can contact the  
On Call Doctor via the Hospital Switchboard : ☎ 01803 614567**

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.