

# Professor Timothy L Jackson

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## Patient Information: Floaters & Posterior Vitreous Detachment

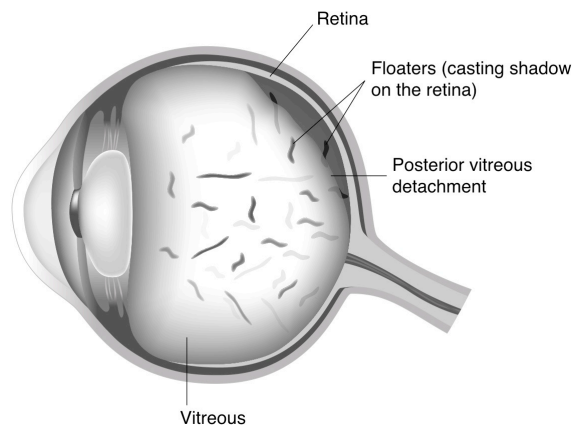
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### What is the vitreous?

The vitreous is a clear gel that fills the cavity of the eye. It is 99% water and is not important for vision.

### What is a posterior vitreous detachment?

As part of the normal ageing process the vitreous may pull away from the back of the eye (retina), and collapse into itself. This is more likely in people who are shortsighted (myopic).



### What are the symptoms of posterior vitreous detachment?

Many people do not know they have had a posterior vitreous detachment as it does not damage vision. Others become aware of **floaters** - small spots or shapes that float in their vision. Floaters do not cause any harm to the eye and they tend to become less noticeable with time. If the floaters are persistent and very troublesome it is possible to remove them with surgery or laser treatment, but this is seldom required. Posterior vitreous detachment can also cause flashes of lights in the affected eye.

If you develop a sudden onset of flashing lights or floaters you should be examined by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) or optician within 24 hours. Having a few longstanding floaters is often normal, but nonetheless warrants routine review by an ophthalmologist or optician.

It is important that the ophthalmologist or optician uses eye drops to dilate your pupil, as this enables him or her to examine your eyes fully. These eye drops will blur your vision for a few hours afterwards, so do not drive to your appointment.

## **Can posterior vitreous detachment damage my eyes?**

No, posterior vitreous detachment does not damage your eyes and does not require treatment. However, posterior vitreous detachment is occasionally associated with retinal tears and retinal detachment. Retinal detachment occurs when the retina (the light-sensing layer of cells in the back of the eye) comes off the back of the eye.

Retinal detachment is a serious condition that requires urgent medical attention. The symptoms of retinal detachment are much like those of posterior vitreous detachment (flashing lights and floaters), but additionally there may be bits missing from the vision (blind spots), or a curtain or veil coming over the vision, or blurred vision.

If you think you have the symptoms of a retinal detachment, please call Professor Jackson immediately. If you are unable to reach Professor Jackson please call the London Clinic and ask for the Eye Centre (020 7935 4444) or attend the 24/7 walk-in eye casualties at Moorfields Eye Hospital, City Road, or The Western Eye Hospital, Marylebone Road.

## **Coping with floaters**

Whilst floaters usually become less noticeable over time, some people find them particularly troublesome. They can be frustrating as they can get in the way of seeing things which can make some activities, such as reading, more difficult. This can be especially true if you have one large floater. The following techniques can help:

- 1] Move your eyes around in a gentle circular motion to create currents in the vitreous gel in your eye. This can sometimes move the floater out of the area of central vision.
- 2] Sunglasses in bright conditions will limit the amount of light entering your eye and may make floaters less obvious.
- 3] Enlarging font sizes or images on your phone or computer can help you to see around the floaters.
- 4] Try to ignore them; the more you look for them or worry about them, the more obvious they will seem. If you can distract yourself from them they may be less intrusive.

## **Any further questions?**

Please call our office on 020 7060 1968

### ***Disclaimer***

*Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this leaflet is accurate and up-to-date, we cannot guarantee its completeness or correctness. It is not designed as a substitute for professional healthcare advice from a doctor.*