

Posterior Vitreous Detachment

Posterior Vitreous Detachment (PVD) is a common, age-related eye condition. The vitreous gel inside the eye pulls away from the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye.

This can cause symptoms like floaters and flashes of light. While usually harmless, it's important to have an eye exam to rule out more serious complications

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What is PVD and Why Does It Occur?

The eye is filled with a clear, jelly-like substance called the vitreous humor. This gel is firmly attached to the retina. As we age, the vitreous humor begins to liquefy and shrink. This process causes the gel to pull away from the retina. This separation is called a posterior vitreous detachment. It is a natural part of the aging process and is very common. The symptoms you may notice—floaters and flashes—are caused by the vitreous gel pulling on the retina. The floaters are small clumps of collagen fibres from the vitreous gel that cast shadows on the retina, while the flashes are a result of the vitreous tugging on the retina.

Who is More Likely to Experience PVD?

PVD is most common in individuals over the age of 50. It is a natural part of aging, and almost everyone will experience it to some degree as they get older. Other risk factors include a history of eye trauma, a high degree of myopia (nearsightedness), and a previous PVD in the other eye. Individuals who have undergone cataract surgery are also more likely to experience a PVD. While PVD is a normal part of the aging process, anyone experiencing new symptoms of floaters or flashes should be evaluated by an eye care professional to rule out more serious retinal conditions.



Meet our Optometrists

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Bachelor in Clinical Optometry
Master of Optometry

How is PVD Managed?

For most people, a PVD does not require any treatment. The symptoms of flashes and floaters will typically fade on their own over several weeks or months as the brain learns to ignore them. However, it's crucial to have a comprehensive eye examination when symptoms first appear. Your eye care professional will perform a dilated eye exam to ensure there are no tears or holes in the retina, which can sometimes occur as the vitreous gel pulls away. If a retinal tear is found, it can be treated with a laser to prevent a more serious retinal detachment.

What to Look Out For in the Future:

Once you have been diagnosed with a PVD, it is important to be aware of certain warning signs. While the condition itself is typically benign, a small percentage of people can develop a retinal tear or detachment. You should seek immediate medical attention if you experience a sudden increase in the number or size of floaters, a sudden onset of new flashes, or a shadow or curtain that seems to be obscuring part of your vision. These could be signs of a retinal tear or detachment, which requires urgent treatment to prevent permanent vision loss.



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