



WHAT ARE *FLOATERS?*

If you find that seemingly out of the blue you have specks, flecks or cobwebs drifting in your field of vision, it is likely you are experiencing eye floaters.

While floaters that appear as thread-like strands, cobweb-type shapes, or small shadowy dots can be very annoying, they are frequently benign and not a sign of retinal damage. However, in some cases, floaters and flashers are indicative of a more severe condition that can lead to vision loss. If you experience a sudden onset or abundance of floaters and spots, flashes of light in the same eye as your floaters, or notice peripheral vision loss, it's essential to get immediate care. Despite being painless, your eyesight may be in jeopardy.

What Are Floaters?

Inside the orb-like structure of your eye, between the lens that is near the front and the retina at the back, is a large section known as the vitreous chamber. This chamber comprises 80% of the structure of your eye and is filled with a clear fluid called the vitreous humour, which protects your eye, helps it keep a roundish shape, and maintains the retina in place. While this gelatinous liquid starts out with a firm jelly-like consistency, with the aging process (around the time you reach your fifties), it starts to liquify and shrink, much like a bowl of gelatin. When this occurs some clumps of the vitreous humour can break away from the edges and float around in the more liquid center. Now, as the light enters your eyes and travels through this clear section, these floating strands cast a shadow on the retina to create the appearance of drifting spots or threads.

How Floaters Affect Your Vision

According to statistics, about 70% of the population experiences a floater at some point in their lives. While you may not notice your floaters throughout the day, at various times, they may appear to drift aimlessly in front of your eye. They can be particularly annoying and noticeable when you are gazing at a blue or overcast sky or looking at a computer screen with a white or light-colored background. Floaters appear to move as your eyes move and then dart away when you try to look at them directly.

Who is at Risk for Floaters?

Floaters are frequently associated with the aging process. In fact, it's estimated that close to one-quarter of the population will develop floaters by the time they reach their 60s, with that number rising to a two-thirds percentage of 80-year olds. People who are very nearsighted, diabetic, and have had cataract surgery or a previous eye injury are also more likely to be affected.

Management & Care

When floaters are just annoying and do not interfere with your daily activities, treatment may not be recommended. However, if you have a significant number of floaters that haven't gotten better over time, surgical options like a vitrectomy, or laser floater treatment may be considered to remove or break apart floaters. Representing the latest advancement in care, laser eye floater treatment carries a lower risk of complications than other procedures.

Whether or not floaters are affecting your vision, it's important to advise your eye doctor of their presence. It's critical to determine if there are any underlying conditions such as retinal tears or detachment that require prompt treatment.

By partnering with your eye doctor in care, you can protect the health of your eyes.

