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Posterior Vitreous Detachment

Most floaters cause no problems to your eye health; a posterior vitreous detachment is a **common** separation of the jelly-like fluid, the vitreous, from the back inside of your eye, the retina. This causes a type of floater that increases the risk of retinal detachment, an eye emergency; the chances of retinal detachment are **very low** but being aware of what to watch for, and then do, are important.

When people have retinal detachment they may see all or just one of the following visual disturbances:

- a sudden dramatic decrease in vision both far away and up close in one eye only; this can be better seen by alternately covering your eyes; you will only be sure which eye is involved if you do this;
- a curtain coming in from one direction, for example, from the right or above or another direction; again, covering your eyes alternately will tell you which eye is involved;
- light flashes that occur in the same location, for example up to the right or down to the left, these may be seen with the eyes open or closed; alternately covering your eyes usually provides no more information about this symptom.

When these symptoms come they do not go away; they are usually noticed continually or with increasing frequency.

If you notice one or more of the above symptoms:

- Minimize movement by lying down on your back, the closer the visual disturbance is to the centre of your vision (the exact spot you are looking at) the more important this is. The worst thing to do is to move too actively, for example jumping up and down or running are the worst things you can do.
- Call us immediately; if we are closed, visit the emergency department at the hospital. Often people will wait for a few days or even longer before they seek help; by then it may be too late.

If you actually do have a retinal detachment and follow the above instructions, the chances of treating your eyes successfully are very good. If you don't, the consequences for your vision can be very serious. Sometimes, when people are advised of the above they worry unnecessarily; this is human nature; the real problem is not knowing what to watch for and do. Being educated and following these instructions significantly decrease your risks.

If your symptoms increase or you have any questions about these instructions, please call our office.