

## Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about posterior vitreous detachment (PVD) and answers some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us.

## What is Posterior Vitreous detachment?

Every person has vitreous jelly at the back of the eye from birth that is attached to the retina, the light-sensitive part of the eye. As part of the ageing process, the vitreous jelly turns into a liquid, thus separating from the rest of the retina (a posterior vitreous detachment).

Floater (which resemble spider webs or tadpoles) are commonly seen, even with normal eyes. Usually they are caused by changes with the vitreous jelly in the back of the eye. Most of the time treatment is unnecessary when high-risk features (such as bleeding within the eye) are absent.

Flashing lights may occur where the jelly starts to separate from the retina and

floaters also may appear when debris forms as a result of this. This usually starts after the age of 50 but other factors like being short-sighted or recently having had an eye operation may also induce symptoms earlier.

## Should I be worried?

In order to carry out a full eye examination drops will be installed to help dilate your pupil.

Uncommonly, in about one in ten patients, floaters may be a warning sign that there is a retinal tear or a detachment.



Posterior vitreous detachment

Rarely, retinal tears may be identified as part of your examination. If that is the case, we will perform a laser procedure to seal the area around the tear so it does not enlarge.

The process takes a few weeks to complete and is a once only treatment in each eye. Further treatment is rarely required.

## Warning signs

If you have any of the following, please seek emergency advice:

- **increased floaters and worsening of vision**
- **flashing lights or increased flashing of lights**
- **part of your vision is missing, and you struggle to see**

**Please return or seek medical attention for another assessment.**

## What happens now?

Flashes usually disappear after a few weeks; floaters are permanent. Fortunately, the brain becomes accustomed to them, so they become less noticeable as time goes by. Usually, wearing sunglasses or avoiding bright light helps to minimise their appearance.

## Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions or concerns please call:

- Emergency Department at Western Eye Hospital – **020 3312 3245**
- Outpatients at Western Eye Hospital – **020 3312 3236**
- Outpatients at Charing Cross Hospital – **020 3311 1109/ 1233/ 0137**

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)  
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

Ophthalmology department

# Posterior vitreous detachment (PVD)

Information for patients, relatives and carers