



Flashes and Floaters: Information for Parents

What are flashes and floaters?

People with normal eyes commonly see flashes of light or black “floaters” which look like spiders or tadpoles. These occur because of changes in the vitreous jelly, which lies directly in front of the retina. Any changes in the vitreous jelly can give rise to the appearance of floaters, but do not usually lead to any serious problems.

Separation or detachment of the vitreous from the retina is a common phenomenon. In 90 per cent of patients this is an entirely harmless change with no damage to the retina. Vitreous detachment is a once-in-a-lifetime event and the vitreous cannot become reattached. Often the floaters will persist but become less noticeable with time.

What is likely to happen?

Flashes and floaters usually remain the same or get better. If your child finds them troublesome, the effect of floaters may be minimised by wearing dark glasses. This will help, especially in bright sunlight or when looking at a brightly lit surface.

What do I need to do now?

When your child was examined today, there was no sign of any damage to the eye, and no treatment was considered necessary. However, if the flashes or floaters become worse, you should take your child to A&E to exclude any serious problems. If your child sees a black shadow or curtain effect, or experiences sudden loss of vision, you should attend the casualty department with your child without delay.