

Eye Health: Floaters in Your Vision—When Should You Be Concerned?

While anyone can develop this eye condition, floaters are more common in people with diabetes who have developed **diabetic retinopathy** or diabetic macular edema. For some, you may not know you have retinopathy, and the development of floaters can actually be what leads you to schedule an eye exam and receive that diagnosis.

What are Floaters?

Floaters can take on the form of many different shapes, including specks, circles, lines, or cobwebs that appear in your vision.

What you're actually seeing is a shadow being cast on your retina, possibly from a cluster of cells, a clump of leaked vitreous fluid, or leaked blood from damaged blood vessels.

You may notice that floaters move with your vision, and they can make reading very tedious and frustrating at times.

While some floaters may be harmless and temporary, for people with diabetes, they can be a sign of a more significant issue in your eyes and it isn't something you should ignore.

What Causes Floaters?

Floaters are common in people with diabetes who:

- Have retinopathy
- Have macular edema or other swelling issues
- Have undergone cataract surgery
- Are nearsighted



If your floaters are the result of a diabetes-related eye complication, it's important to work with your health care team to improve your blood glucose (blood sugar) levels, maintain an A1C of less than 7 percent, and follow through on treatment for that specific eye condition.

Are Floaters Permanent or Temporary?

It depends. Some floaters may come and go, but if your floaters are related to ongoing issues in your eyes, like retinopathy or glaucoma, they may linger much longer or be present for months or years. Regardless, most floaters become less visible as time goes on.

When Should You be Concerned About Floaters?

There are several factors to consider that determine how alarmed you should be if floaters develop in your vision.



When you have diabetes, you should always report the presence of floaters to your eye doctor. Even if you have diagnosed eye complications, and you've experienced floaters before, the sudden development of new floaters could be a sign of a new issue or the worsening of an existing issue.

You should also contact your eye doctor immediately if your floaters are accompanied by flashes of light. Flashes of light could mean you've experienced a retinal tear or a detached retina which can threaten your vision and requires immediate treatment.

How are Floaters Treated?

While floaters can be irritating as they interfere with your vision, most people will not receive treatment for floaters unless they become a major problem with your ability to see.

For some, you can shift the floater out of your direct line of vision by moving your eyes up, down, then side-to-side. This can provide temporary relief by shifting its position in your vision.

There are two types of treatments available for floaters:

- **Vitrectomy:** A vitrectomy is surgery on the retina and is used to remove the vitreous gel that causes a floater.
- **YAG vitreolysis:** Vitreolysis is a laser treatment that essentially zaps the floater and breaks it into significantly smaller pieces that are less noticeable in your vision. It can also move the pieces further out of your line of sight.

The **risks associated with either of these treatments** are serious enough that most eye doctors may not recommend treating floaters. Instead, you can reduce the development of floaters by focusing on the treatment of other existing eye conditions with your eye doctor and improving your blood glucose (blood sugar) levels with support from your health care team.



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