

Posterior Vitreous Detachment

This material will help you understand posterior vitreous detachment, as well as its causes and symptoms.

What is a posterior vitreous detachment?

The vitreous is the clear gel that fills the back of the eye. It is connected to the surface of the retina by millions of tiny fibers or strands. The retina is the thin layer in the back of the eye that acts like the “film” of the eye. It captures images passing through the front of the eye and then sends them to the brain. As you get older, the vitreous gel slowly turns to a liquid and starts to shrink. The vitreous then begins to pull away, or detach, from the retina as the strands that connect them break. This is called a posterior vitreous detachment.

What causes a posterior vitreous detachment?

A posterior vitreous detachment usually occurs as a natural part of aging. It usually occurs after the age of 50. However, it may occur earlier, especially in people who are nearsighted. Posterior vitreous detachment can also be the result of an eye injury or can happen after eye surgery.

What are the symptoms of a posterior vitreous detachment?

Common symptoms of a posterior vitreous detachment include seeing flashes and floaters. **Flashes** are sudden lights that appear in your field of vision. This is caused by the vitreous gel rubbing or pulling on the retina. **Floaters** look like small dots or clouds moving in your field vision. As the vitreous shrinks, clumps or strands can form inside the eye. These can cast shadows on the retina, which cause the floaters you see.

If you notice any sudden changes in your symptoms, especially if you see more flashes or floaters, contact your eye doctor right away. This may be a sign of a more serious condition.

How is a posterior vitreous detachment treated?

In most cases, a posterior vitreous detachment will not cause any problems to your vision and does not require treatment.

In rare cases, the vitreous may pull hard enough to tear the retina in one or more places. Tears or holes in the retina can also lead to a retinal detachment. These are more serious eye conditions that may affect your vision and will require treatment.

For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.



<http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/vitreous/vitreous.asp>

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