

This material will help you understand what a torn retina is, its causes and how it may be treated.

What is a retinal tear?

If you compare the eye to an old-fashioned camera, the retina is the thin layer of film lining the back of the eye. The retina captures images that pass through the front of the eye and then sends them to the brain. The retina is normally a smooth, continuous layer. When the retina is pulled on, a small hole or tear may develop. This tear may allow fluid to get underneath the retina, causing it to not work properly. Seeing flashes and/or floaters in your field of vision are common symptoms of a torn retina.

What causes the retina to tear?

The back of the eye is filled with a clear gel called the **vitreous** (vit-ree-us). As you get older, the vitreous gel turns to a liquid and starts to shrink. This causes it to pull away from the retina. Sometimes, the vitreous will pull hard enough to tear the retina in one or more places, creating a small hole(s). If not treated, the retina may slowly peel from its position on the back wall of the eye, similar to wallpaper peeling off of a wall. This is called a retinal detachment, which is a serious eye condition that can lead to permanent vision loss.

How are retinal tears treated?

If your retina is torn, there are two standard treatment options. One involves use of a laser, the other is a freeze treatment called cryotherapy. Both of these treatments work to seal the retina to the back wall of the eye and prevent detachment. These treatments are usually performed in your eye doctor's office.

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



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/detached-torn-retina/treatment.cfm>

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