

Notice flashes or black spots in your vision ?

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Our eyes are the best natural camera that allow us to capture all the beauty present on this planet in our memory. Any slightest of irritation or blockage in our eyes can hinder our views and affect us deeply. Sometimes this blockage of view appears in the form of grey or black specks or even strings drifting across the eyes. These spots in the vision are called eye floaters. These drifting cobwebs, however, seem to fling away when one attempts to take a direct look at them.

There is a jelly-like substance (vitreous) present inside our eyes. This substance tends to take a more liquid form with age-related changes which mostly lead to eye floaters. Vitreous is also responsible for helping the eyeballs in maintaining their shape. Over the time as vitreous liquefies, microscopic protein fibers present within the vitreous are likely to shrink to little shreds, clump together and cast tiny shadows (also called floaters) in the retina. As the vitreous sags and becomes stringy, a debris is produced which blocks some of the light passing through the eyes which diffuses the shadow said Dr. Rajesh R, Consultant-Oncology & Vitreo Retina, Sankara Eye Hospital.

Common causes likely to result in eye floaters include:

- Aging, usually between 50-75 years of age
- Rubbing the eyes
- Eye disease or eye injury

- As a result of nearsightedness / Myopia
- In people who have had cataract surgery
- Eye tumors
- Medication
- Posterior eye inflammation
- Eye bleeding
- Tear retina
- Advance Diabetic retinopathy

The vitreous can also be bleeding due to certain underlying conditions like diabetes, blocked blood vessels, injury, hypertension, etc. In such cases the blood cells can appear as floaters. The sagging of vitreous also tends to tear the retina. If left untreated, retinal tear can further cause retinal detachment. Retinal detachments are an accumulation of the fluid behind the retina which separates retina from the back of your eye. Unattended retinal detachment can also become a reason for permanent vision loss. Sometimes, certain medications are injected into the vitreous which form air bubbles. Until these bubbles are absorbed by the eye, they are seen as shadows. Silicone oil bubbles are at times added into the vitreous due to some vitreoretinal surgeries. These can also appear as floaters.

Hence it is important to be aware of the symptoms and notice if you come across eye floaters frequently. Some of the symptoms that can be watched out for are:

Ø You may start to see small shapes in your vision which look like dark specks or knobby, transparent strings of floating material.

Ø These spots that you might be seeing, tend to move when you move your eyes. However, when you try to look at these spots directly, they quickly move out of your visual field.

Ø These spots are especially noticeable when you look at a plain bright background, like the blue sky or a white wall.

Ø These tiny shapes or strings eventually settle down and drift out of the line of vision

So, if you notice more eye floaters compared to the usual manner, or you notice a sudden onset of new eye floaters, you must consider visiting a Retina-specialist. You should also notice if you see flashes of in the same eye as the floaters or darkness on any side/sides of your vision (peripheral vision loss). These symptoms mostly occur without any pain and hence are at the risk of being ignored or not taken seriously.

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