

Have you ever seen something move past your eye and disrupt your vision? More than likely it was a floater. Floaters are the debris that float around in your vitreous and can be seen in your field of vision. Unless you have done some research on your own, you may be asking, what is a vitreous? The vitreous is a gel-like substance that consumes about 80 percent of the eye and helps it maintain its shape. As the body, and therefore the eye ages, the vitreous slowly shrinks. As this process occurs the gel can become stringy and separated and these break-away pieces? will cast shadows on the retina and actually causes us to see spots. The spots are commonly called floaters.

Floaters come in all shapes a sizes. It all depends on how the gel breaks down, as well as the position of the floater in the individual eye. Some floaters can look large, grey, and almost like a cobweb, while others may be small, dark, and dense. Many people's floaters are thread-like strands, or squiggly lines which can appear to be transparent. Depending on how liquid the vitreous has become your floaters may move out of your line of sight if you move your eye or it may remain relatively in the same position with little movement at all. Floaters, no matter what the size or shape, are usually noticed the most when looking at something bright, such as white paper or a blue sky.

Doctors have gotten into the habit of telling patients that floaters will go away or dissolve. Unfortunately, there is no scientific evidence to back this up. More likely what happens, is the brain begins to filter the floaters out. The brain sees it as unnecessary information? and actually stops seeing the floater.

So, who gets floaters? Are they treatable? Are they avoidable?

1. **Who gets floaters?** Almost everyone will develop floaters as they age. Those who are nearsighted have diabetes, have had an eye injury, or who have had a cataract operation will have a higher chance of getting age-related floaters at an earlier age. There are also other less common causes of floaters such as infection, uveitis, hemorrhaging, vitreous detachment, retinal detachment, and retinal tears.

2. **Are they treatable?** This topic has long been debated. Most eye doctors will tell you there is no treatment, and you must learn to live with them. In severe cases a vitrectomy, a surgical procedure that removes floaters from the vitreous, can be used. This operation carries significant risks to sight because of possible complications, which include retinal detachment, retinal tears, and accelerated cataract. Another treatment? is the use of lasers, but this is considered ineffective by the majority of doctors, and actually may cause more floaters in the

long run.

3. **Are they avoidable?** There has been very little research into floaters. Currently, there are no recommended steps to take to avoid floaters. Hopefully, with more research science may find steps to help prevent floaters in the future.

Now that you know a little more about floaters, the main question I hope that you are asking is, "how can I help?"

There is currently no research being conducted anywhere in the world to find a treatment for floaters. They have been categorized as a normal part of aging, and there is little interest in treating them. However, those who have floaters will tell you a different story. Those who stare day in and day out at these shadows and spots floating across their eyes are very receptive to finding a cure. There are very few things in this world that every single person will develop. Floaters happen to be one of these afflictions.

Whether you currently suffer with floaters today, or are concerned about having floaters in the future, wouldn't it be comforting to know that science was working on a treatment on your behalf? By making a donation to the Eye on Vision Foundation today, you are helping to ensure a clearer tomorrow.

An Insider's View



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