



**Bayside Eye Specialists**

*Excellence in Eye Care*

## FLOATERS AND FLASHES

The small lines, dots, circles, tea leaves, flies or cobwebs that many people see moving in their field of vision are called **FLOATERS**. They are more visible when looking at a plain background, such as a white wall or bright sky. They are very common, especially in middle age.

Floaters are small lumps of gel that form in the vitreous, the clear jelly that fills the inside cavity of the eye. Although they appear to be in front of the eye, they are actually floating inside the eye and cast shadows on the retina.

Everyone who gets floaters and flashes complains that they are of nuisance value. In a tiny number of people flashes and floaters can indicate that there is a weakness in the retina that can seriously threaten vision and a careful examination of the retina is required to determine if there are any weak spots that might be torn as the vitreous jelly collapses. These problems are more likely if the patient is short-sighted.

If the ophthalmologist says that everything is OK, then at least 99% of the time one can expect the normal ageing process of vitreous jelly condensation and collapsing ("posterior vitreous detachment") to occur without threat of retinal tear or detachment.

If the ophthalmologist detects a weak patch of retina then treatment with laser or freezing probe may be recommended.

No matter how recently you have been examined and given the "all clear", ANY SUDDEN ONSET OF MANY NEW FLOATERS OR FLASHES OF LIGHT SHOULD BE RE-EVALUATED with an urgent dilated pupil examination by an ophthalmologist.

Surgery to remove a floater is considered very rare.