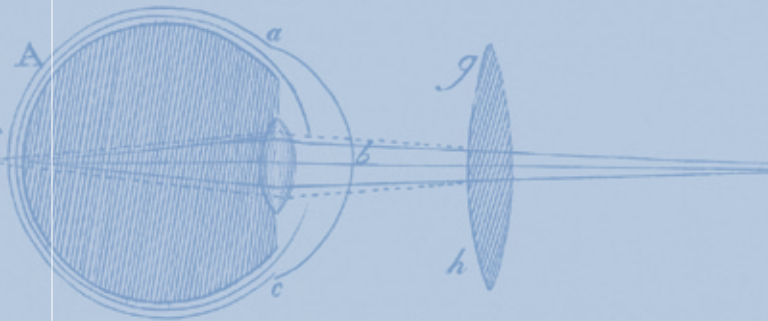
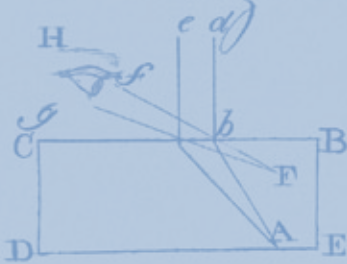


*Fig. 2.*

# Flashes & Floaters



*Fig. 5.*



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**Retina Specialty Institute** is the premier retinal practice in the Southeast. Our physicians fight for the amazing gift of sight every day through clinical research and practical treatment. The Institute offers state-of-the-art clinical and surgical procedures for patients suffering from eye diseases such as:

- Macular Degeneration
- Diabetic Retinopathy
- Retinal Tears, Holes and Detachments
- Epiretinal Membrane (Macular Pucker)
- Arterial and Venous Occlusions
- Complications of Cataract Surgery
- Uveitis (Inflammation in the Eye)
- Ocular Tumors
- Inherited Retinal Diseases
- Severe Eye Trauma
- Optic Nerve Disorders

Our surgeons, located throughout the Gulf Coast and Southern Alabama, are a group of world-class retina specialists who have earned an international reputation as leading retina researchers, disciplined clinical experts and caring, compassionate healers. Experience visionary retina care.



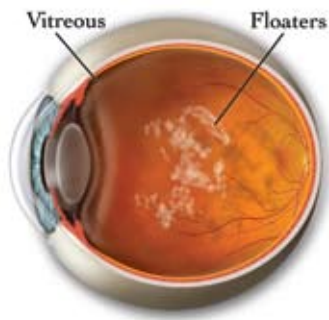
## What You're About to Read

1. *About Floaters*
2. *People at Risk*
3. *Treatment*
4. *Seriousness*

### 1

## What are Floaters?

Particles or specks that appear in your line of vision are called “floaters.” They can look like pieces of lint or grains of sand. You may see them most often when you look at a light-colored background, like the sky or your computer screen. Some people see them going back and forth across the page as they read. Patients describe them as gnats, cobwebs, or squiggly lines. They appear to be in motion.



The clinical term for floaters is “syneresis,” which means “contraction of a gel.” While they seem to be on the eye’s surface, they actually float around inside your eye, which is how they get their name.

Your eyeball isn’t solid, and it isn’t static. It’s filled with clear gel called “vitreous” that goes through several stages during the regular human aging process.

The vitreous develops as a system of blood vessels and then gradually transforms into a dense, gelatin-like material without blood vessels, all before you are born.

As you age, the vitreous gel continues to change. It can get thicker and clump. Fluid pockets can become trapped inside it, or it can shrink in the cavity, pulling away in strings from the back of the eye. You see these clumps, pockets and strings as floaters.

## 2

### **Who Gets Floaters?**

Roughly, a quarter of all people begin to notice floaters in their forties, and more than half see them during their sixties and seventies.

If you are nearsighted or have had cataracts removed, you are more likely to see floaters.



## **How Can Floaters be Treated?**

Floaters often need no treatment and can fade over time. They can be removed, if significantly impacting quality of life, but that is rarely necessary. Many times, they will fade on their own as the vitreous continues to liquify and change shape.

Moving your eyes around may cause them to reposition slightly and give you some relief. If you find that floaters impede your vision on a regular basis, we are always happy to check them out.

One of our doctors will check behind your eye to confirm whether there is a tear or a detachment. When caught early, tears can be repaired in the office with laser treatment. Retinal detachments require surgery.

## Are Floaters Serious?

Floaters can be harmless, but you should always have them checked out, especially if they appear suddenly or if you see flashes of light.

Flashes of light are caused when the vitreous gel nudges or pulls on the retina. Most of the time it's fine. However, if you see the flashes of light combined with a sudden shower of new floaters, it can indicate a torn retina.



The retina is the thin nerve tissue lining the inside wall at the back of the eye. When the vitreous contracts, it doesn't always separate neatly. It can pull the back part of the eye along with it, causing the retina to tear or bleed. Retina specialists are trained to examine and treat conditions of the retina. We can repair tears and prevent them from causing the retina to detach or pull away from the eye wall. A retinal detachment causes vision loss.



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