Follow-up care

You will have a follow-up appointment with your ophthalmologist in 4 to 6 weeks. If you do not have an appointment scheduled, call the Eye Care Centre.

› Phone: 902-473-3226

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: https://811.novascotia.ca

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Patient & Family Guide
2023

Posterior Vitreous Detachment (PVD)

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www.nshealth.ca

Posterior Vitreous Detachment

What is posterior vitreous detachment?

- Posterior vitreous detachment (PVD) is a common eye condition that can cause floaters (dots or spots) and flashes of light in your vision. More than half of people over the age of 65 will have PVD.
- PVD happens when your vitreous humor (a gel at the back of your eye) starts to shrink and becomes liquid.
- A healthy vitreous humour is attached to a part of your eye called the retina. When the vitreous humour shrinks, it can detach (come apart) from parts of the retina.
- PVD is common as we age. The symptoms of PVD can be frustrating, but they almost always go away. Most of the time, PVD does not cause any permanent vision damage.

How is PVD diagnosed?

- An ophthalmologist (eye doctor) will look at the back of your eye.
- Your pupils will be dilated (made wider with drops). This is done so the ophthalmologist can have a better view of your eye.

How is PVD treated?

- There is no treatment for PVD. Most cases of PVD go away or get better with time.
- Over time, your brain will teach itself to ignore the floaters and you will not notice them as much or at all. This can take weeks or months to happen.
- If your PVD gets worse and turns into a retinal tear or a detachment, you may need eye surgery.

What helps with PVD?

- Wearing sunglasses in bright sunlight may help you notice floaters less.
- Wear prescription glasses (if you have them) for distance or reading. They may make your vision clearer and the floaters less noticeable.

Retinal detachment

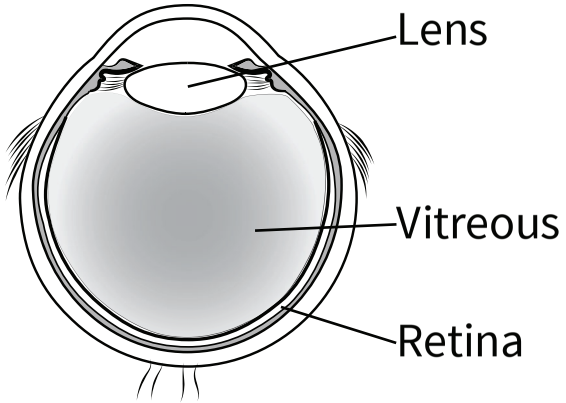
- This is a more serious symptom of PVD, but it is rare.
- Retinal detachment happens when the vitreous humour pulls away from the retina too quickly and causes a small hole, or tear, in the retina. Tears in the retina can grow and cause the retina to pull away and separate.
- Sometimes a blood vessel in your retina can tear. This can cause a vitreous hemorrhage (bleeding inside your eye).
- **Retinal tears and separations can cause permanent damage to your vision.**

See your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) right away if:

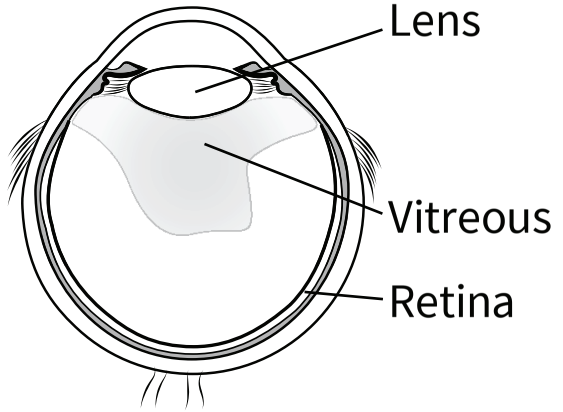
› You see an effect like a curtain moving across your vision. This may come up from the bottom, down from the top, or move across your vision.

› The flashes of light and floaters in your vision are not getting better over time, or are getting worse.

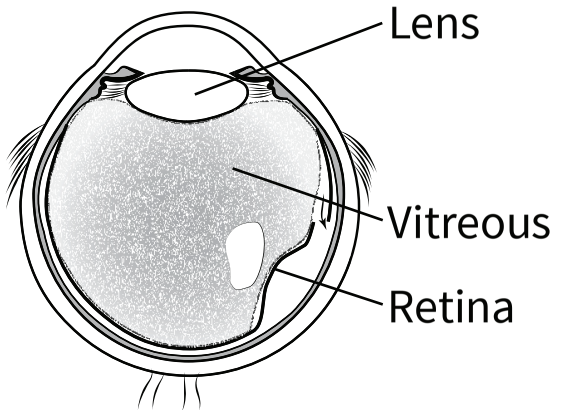
Healthy eye



PVD



Retinal detachment



What causes PVD?

- PVD is caused by:
  - aging. This is the most common cause of PVD.
  - cataract surgery or other eye procedures.
  - damage or injury to the eye.
- PVD is more common in people who are near-sighted (cannot see things that are far away without glasses).

Is PVD inherited (passed down in families)?

- PVD is not inherited, but more serious complications (like retinal detachments) may be.

It is important to tell your eye doctor if members of your family have had retinal detachments.

What are the symptoms?

Floaters

- You may see dots or spots in your vision. These are called floaters.

- When the vitreous humour shrinks and becomes liquid, some of the cells can stick together and cast shadows on your retina. This is why you may see floaters.
- You may feel like you are looking through a spider web, or a net. This effect on your vision happens when your vitreous humour is starting to pull away from the edge of your retina. The effect will usually go away when the vitreous humour comes away from your retina fully.
- Often, floaters will go away over time.

Bright flashes or spots of light in your vision

- Your retina sends messages to your brain when your vitreous humour starts pulling away. These messages are tiny electrical impulses. They appear in your vision as bright flashes of light.
- The flashes of light usually go away once the vitreous humour comes away from your retina fully.