



Patient & Family Guide
2020

Posterior Vitreous Detachment (PVD)

Aussi disponible en français : *Décollement postérieur du vitré (DPV)* (FF85-2162)



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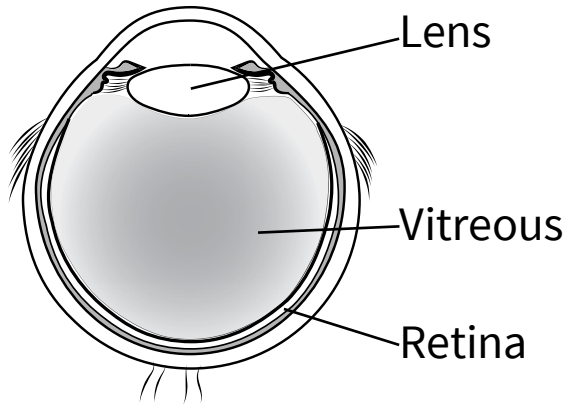
What is posterior vitreous detachment?

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 age 65 will experience PVD.

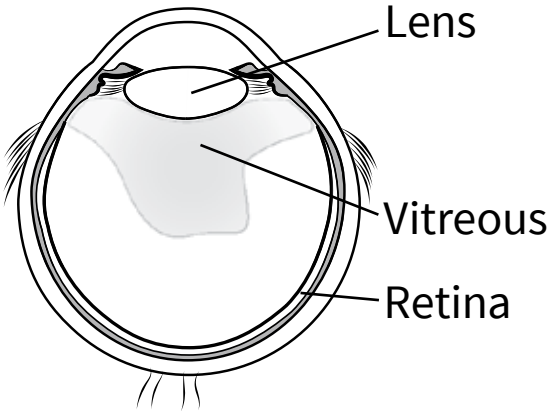
PVD happens when a gel at the back of the eye starts to shrink with age and becomes liquid. This gel, called the vitreous humor, is normally attached to the ‘film’ of the eye, called the retina. When the vitreous humor shrinks and pulls away from the retina, it can come apart from the retina in some places.

PVD is a natural part of the aging process and is very common in people over age 65. PVD can be frustrating but it almost always goes away and will usually not cause any permanent damage to your vision.

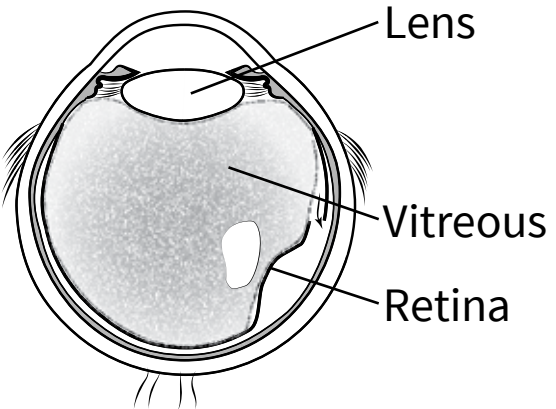
Normal eye



Complete PVD



Retinal detachment



What causes PVD?

PVD is most commonly due to aging, but can also happen after cataract surgery or other eye procedures. PVD can also happen after damage or injury to the eye and is more common in people who are near-sighted (cannot see things that are far away without glasses).

Is PVD passed down in families?

PVD is not inherited (passed from parents to their children). But more serious complications (like retinal detachments) may be. It is important to tell your doctor if members of your family have had retinal detachments.

What are the symptoms of PVD?

When the vitreous humor gel shrinks and turns more fluid-like, some of the cells stick together and can cast shadows on the retina. This why you may see dots or spots in your vision called floaters. Some people may find these floaters distracting and bothersome while other people may not notice them very much.

The floaters in your vision often go away slowly over time. You may feel as if you are looking through a cobweb or a net; this is a normal symptom of PVD. This cobweb effect happens because the vitreous humor starts to pull away from the edge of the retina. It usually goes away once the vitreous separates from the retina completely.

You may see bright flashes or spots of light. The retina senses when the vitreous humor starts to pull away and sends messages to the brain. These messages are actually tiny electrical impulses and can be seen as bright flashes of light. The flashes of light usually go away once the vitreous separates from the retina fully.

Rarely, PVD can cause more serious problems. Sometimes, when the vitreous humor pulls away from the retina, it can separate too quickly and cause a small hole, or tear, in the retina. Tears in the retina can grow larger and cause the retina itself to pull away and separate.

This is known as a retinal detachment. Sometimes a retinal blood vessel can be torn and this can cause bleeding inside the eye, known as a vitreous hemorrhage. Retinal tears and separations can cause permanent damage to your vision.

See a doctor right away if:

- You notice a curtain-like effect moving across your vision. This curtain-like effect may come up from the bottom, down from the top, or move across your vision.
- You notice the flashes of light and floaters in your vision are not getting better over time or are getting worse.

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) beforehand so that the doctor can have a better view.

How is PVD treated?

- There is no treatment for PVD. Most cases of PVD go away or get better with time. It may take months, but eventually your brain will teach itself to ignore the floaters and you will not notice them as much or at all. For some people, this improvement comes within a few weeks.
- If your PVD gets worse and turns into a retinal tear or detachment, you may need eye surgery.

What can I do to help myself?

- You may find that wearing sunglasses in bright sunlight helps to make the floaters less noticeable.
- If you need prescription glasses for distance or reading, wearing your glasses may make your vision clearer and the floaters less noticeable.

Followup care

You will have a followup appointment with your eye doctor in 4 to 6 weeks. If you do not have an appointment scheduled, call the Eye Care Centre at 902-473-3226.

