

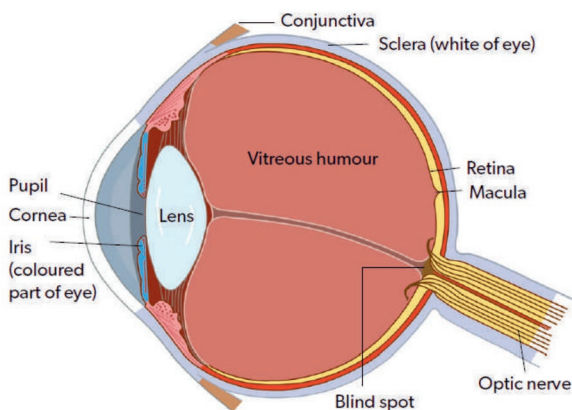
RETINAL DETACHMENT

What is retinal detachment?

A detached or torn retina is a serious but relatively rare condition of the eye, which requires emergency treatment to prevent permanent vision loss.

The retina, a thin layer of tissue at the back of the eye, can become detached. The part of the retina that becomes detached loses blood supply and stops working, causing you to lose vision.

It is also possible to tear the retina, which means fluid gets into the space behind the retina, causing it to detach and affect your vision.



Some people are more likely to suffer from retinal detachment than others:

- People with a family history of the condition
- Very short sighted people
- People who receive a blow to or around the eye

How do I know if I have a problem?

A detached retina is painless, so the first signs you will notice are changes in your vision, such as:

- An increase in the number of floaters. Floaters are small specks you see floating in front of your eyes.

They are very common and you will notice them most when looking at light backgrounds or when out in the sun. Floaters don't do any harm so are generally nothing to worry about, but if you notice a sudden increase it's important to get advice, as they may be an early sign of retinal detachment

- Flashing lights. Can be caused by something else, like a migraine, but if they last for over an hour they may be a sign of retinal detachment
- Loss of vision, whether in part or full. This can be like a curtain falling over part of your eye
- A change or blurring in your vision. The lens and cornea in your eye focus on the retina. If your retina has moved, the image will be blurred

Any of these symptoms on their own may indicate other conditions rather than a detached retina, but if any occur it is important to see your optometrist or doctor as soon as possible.

What treatment is available?

If your retina becomes detached or torn, you will need surgery to repair it to help restore or stop any loss of vision.

A hole or tear in the retina may be treated by a special type of laser treatment called photocoagulation. This fuses the retina to the underlying layer to stop any fluids that could damage the retina from getting in.

Treatment can also involve a technique called scleral buckling. Silicone bands on the outside of the eyeball gently hold the wall of the eye against the retina, allowing it to reattach itself.

How do I get help?

If you are worried you may have symptoms of a detached or torn retina, contact your optometrist or doctor immediately. If they are unavailable, visit your nearest emergency department.