

# Posterior vitreous detachment

## - an eye condition

This information sheet has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have about posterior vitreous detachment. If you have any questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

### What is posterior vitreous detachment?

Posterior vitreous detachment is an eye condition. The vitreous is the clear, jelly-like substance in your eye. It provides shape and nutrients to your eye. With posterior vitreous detachment, this jelly becomes more liquid and comes away or detaches from your retina (the light sensitive layer at the back of your eye). It then starts to move around.

### What causes posterior vitreous detachment?

The vitreous changes with age, so posterior vitreous detachment most commonly affects people over the age of 65. There is nothing you can do to prevent it.

### What are the signs and symptoms? Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

You may notice:

- black 'floaters' in your vision which move and then settle as the eye rests
- flashing lights like little flickers in the periphery (edges) of your vision.

Posterior vitreous detachment does not permanently affect your eyesight.

### How is it diagnosed?

An ophthalmologist (specialist eye doctor) or nurse practitioner will put eye drops into your eye to dilate (enlarge) your pupil. This enables them to look at the middle and back of your eye with a microscope. These eye drops will affect your vision and make things appear blurred – this usually lasts for two to three hours. **You must not drive while your vision is affected.**

### What treatments are available?

There is no treatment available for posterior vitreous detachment. By having your eyes checked, you can be reassured that this is the cause of your symptoms and nothing more serious. You may find the symptoms irritating at first but they will settle and gradually become easier to live with. Unfortunately there is nothing you can do to make the symptoms go away.

## Is there anything I should look out for?

Contact the nurse practitioner in eye casualty as soon as possible if the symptoms become worse and you notice:

- an increase in flashing lights
- an increase in size or numbers of 'floaters'
- a 'cobweb' or 'curtain' coming over your vision
- sudden deterioration of your vision.

These could be the signs of a tear in your retina. This happens if the vitreous is so firmly attached to the retina that it pulls and tears the retina as it moves away. This is very rare and can be treated.

## Useful sources of information

The Royal National Institute for the Blind has an information sheet on posterior vitreous detachment. Tel: **0845 766 9999**. Website: **www.rnib.org.uk**

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the nurses in the eye day care unit at St Thomas' hospital on 020 7188 6564

- Monday to Friday 7.30am to 6pm
- Saturdays 9am – 12pm.

Outside these hours, please contact the eye doctor on call via the main switchboard on 020 7188 7188.

### Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'    t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy's    e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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