

Vitreous Hemorrhage

The vitreous is a thick, gel-like fluid that fills the eye and is attached to your retina. As you age, the normal jelly-like consistency of the vitreous begins to thin. Sometimes, the vitreous contracts and pulls away from the back of the eye. This normally causes harmless floaters (spots) and flashes of light in the vision. These aren't dangerous but more serious eye conditions can accompany them.

A vitreous hemorrhage, also called a vitreous bleed, happens when the blood vessels in the retina are damaged and bleed into the vitreous cavity, which occasionally leads to a tear in the retina or retinal blood vessels.

Causes

A vitreous hemorrhage can be the result of a disease, such as diabetes or sickle cell anemia, a break or detachment of the retina, a retinal vein occlusion or trauma.

Symptoms

The symptoms of a vitreous hemorrhage will vary, depending on the size and degree of bleeding, and may include blurred vision, flashes of light, dark or red floaters (spots) and loss of vision.

If you experience many floaters, a change in your vision and/or persistent light flashes, please call for an appointment right away. A vitreous hemorrhage is a serious eye condition and can lead to sight loss.

Treatment

We use a combination of eye examination and ultrasound to determine the origin of your symptoms.

While vitreous hemorrhage is a serious condition, sometimes treatment is not needed. We may prescribe bed rest with your head elevated for a few days, or we may recommend that you stop taking certain medications.

In some cases, however, intensive treatment, such as cryotherapy, laser photocoagulation or surgery may be required to remove the blood.