

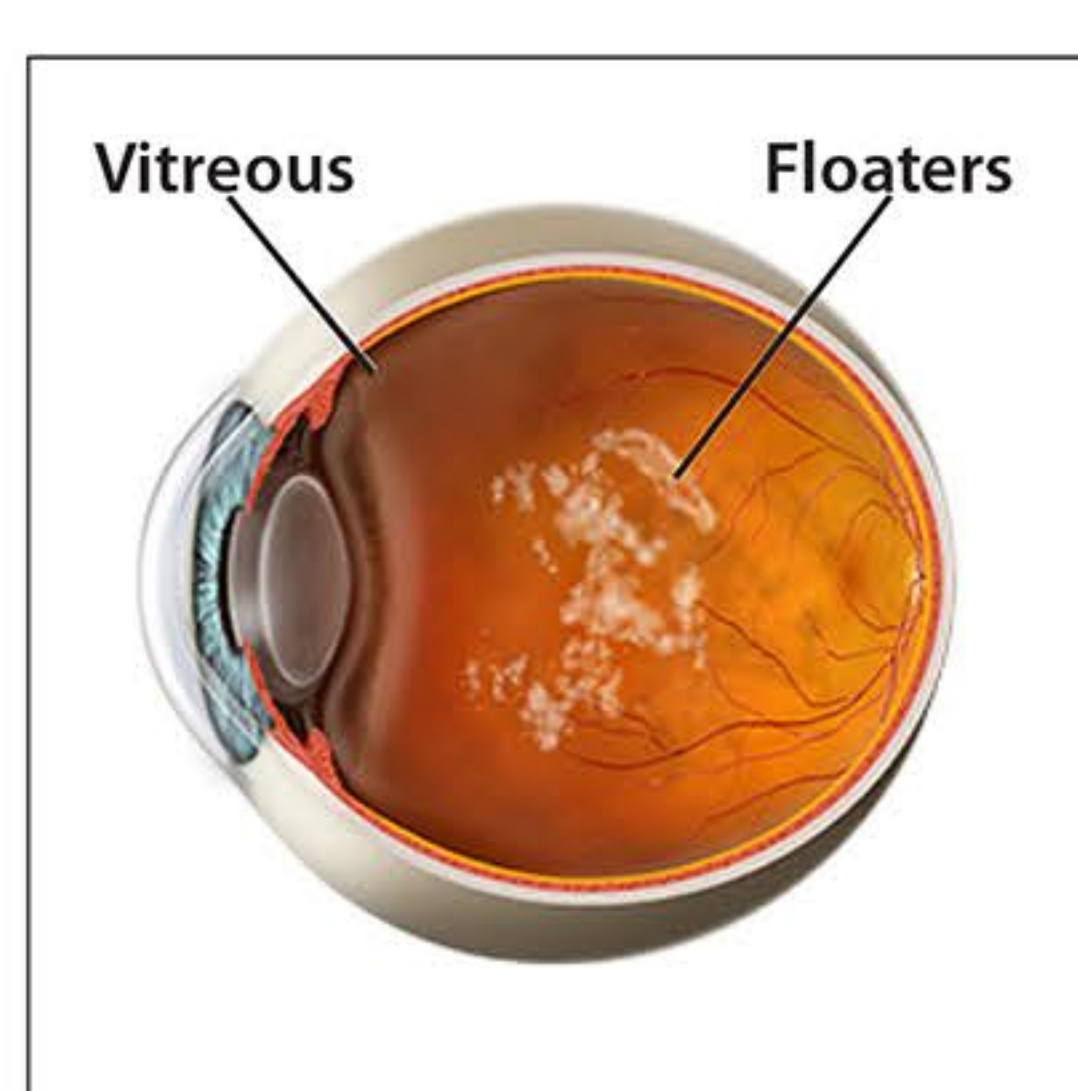
BECAUSE THERE IS  
SO MUCH TO SEE.

## Flashes and floating objects in your vision Should you be concerned?

The small specks, “bugs” or clouds that you may sometimes see moving in your field of vision are called floaters. They are frequently visible when looking at a plain background, such as a blank wall or blue sky. These visual phenomena have been described for centuries; the ancient Romans called them muscae volitantes or “flying flies” since they can appear like small flies moving around in the air. Floaters are actually tiny clumps of gel or cellular debris within the vitreous, the clear jelly like fluid that fills the inside cavity of the eye. Although the floaters appear visually to be in front of eye, they are actually floating in the vitreous fluid inside the eye. Moving your eyes back and forth and up and down create currents within the vitreous capable of moving the floaters outside your direct line of vision.

### What causes Floaters?

The vitreous gel degenerates in middle age, often forming microscopic clumps



or strands within the eye. Vitreous shrinkage or condensation is called posterior vitreous detachment, and is a common cause of floaters.

It also occurs frequently in nearsighted people or in those who have undergone cataract operations or YAG laser surgery. Occasionally, floaters result from inflammation within the eye or from crystal-like deposits which form dots, circles, line, clouds or cobwebs. It may be alarming, especially if they develop suddenly. However, they are nothing to be concerned about usually, and simply

result from the normal aging process.

### Are Floaters ever serious?

The vitreous covers the retinal surface. Occasionally the retina is torn when degenerating vitreous gel pulls away. This causes a small amount of bleeding in the eye which may appear as a group of new floaters. A torn retina can be serious if it develops into a retinal detachment. Any sudden onset of new floaters or flashes of light should be promptly evaluated by your medical eye doctor. Additional symptoms, especially loss of peripheral or side vision require repeat ophthalmic examination.

### What can be done about Floaters?

Floaters may interface with clear vision, often when reading, and can be quite annoying. Although, there is no treatment or cure for most floaters, they usually diminish by themselves over time. You can take simple measures to temporarily move them from your sight. If floaters appear directly in your line of vision, try moving

your eye around. The inside fluid may swirl and allow the floaters to move out of the way. We are most accustomed to moving our eyes side to side, but looking up and down will cause different currents within the eye and may be more effective in getting the floaters out of the way.

### What causes flashing lights?

When vitreous gel which fills the inside of the eyes, rubs or pulls on the retina, it sometimes produces the illusion of flashing lights or lightning streaks.

You may have experienced this same sensation if you have ever been hit in the eye and seen “stars”. The flashes of light may appear off and on for several weeks or months. This commonly occurs as we grow older and is usually not a cause for worry. On rare occasions, however, light flashes accompany a large number of new floaters and even a partial loss or shadow in the side vision. When this happens, prompts examination by ophthalmologist is important to determine if

a torn retina or retinal detachment has occurred. Flashes of light which appear as jagged lines or “heat waves” often lasting 10-20 minutes and present in both eyes are likely to be migraine linked and caused by a spasm of the blood vessels in the brain.

If a headache follows, it is called a migraine headache. However, these jagged lines or “heat waves” commonly occur without a subsequent headache. In the case, the light flashes are referred

to an ophthalmic migraine without headache. As with floaters, if you experience the abrupt onset of many light flashes you should be examined by an ophthalmologist.

At **Banaji Eyecare**, examination will involve a careful observation of the retina and vitreous gel after your pupils have been dilated with eye drops. Medical training and experience is required to perform this examination properly.