

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Eye Floaters Are A Common Problem”

Eye floaters are dots or specks in a person's vision that seem to float away when the person tries to look directly at them. Eye floaters are a normal part of the aging process. The American Society of Retina Specialists note that conditions such as vitreous detachment, which causes more floaters, are more common after the age of 60. Everyone can get eye floaters at some point, though most people ignore them. It seems as though everyone gets them, but they are rarely a cause for alarm. But in some rare cases they can indicate a more serious condition. Many people think eye floaters are simply dust that gets in your eyes, but this is not the case. This is because they move when your eye moves. The main symptoms of eye floaters are small areas in a person's field of vision that seem out of place. Floaters can take different shapes. Most eye floaters are caused by age-related changes that occur as the jelly-like substance (vitreous) inside your eyes becomes more liquid. Microscopic fibers within the vitreous tend to clump and can cast tiny shadows on your retina. The shadows you see are called floaters. Floaters are tiny but can significantly affect the vision, as they are very close to the input of the eye. One characteristic of eye floaters is that they seem to dart back and forth across the field of vision. Trying to look directly at a floater will cause it to move away in the direction the person looks. When the person rests their eyes, the floaters seem to drift on their own. Eye floaters do not usually require treatment, as they themselves do not cause any harm to the sight. However, in some cases, eye floaters may make it difficult to see and will require removal to restore sight. Eye floaters may also be an early sign of an underlying issue, such as damage to the retina. If you experience a sudden onset of floaters, if they are accompanied by flashes of light or vision loss, if you have pain or you have just experienced eye surgery or trauma, floaters could indicate a serious eye problem that requires immediate medical attention. Although some floaters in the eye may be a normal part of the aging process, experiencing a sudden increase of floaters in the eye may be a sign of another issue, such as retinal detachment. Retinal detachment is serious and may lead to blindness without treatment. Anyone who notices a sudden increase in floaters, along with other symptoms, should see an eye doctor immediately.

In the America that I love, eye floaters are a part of life, that we learn to live with.

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