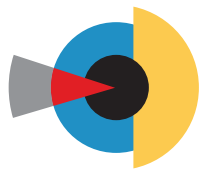


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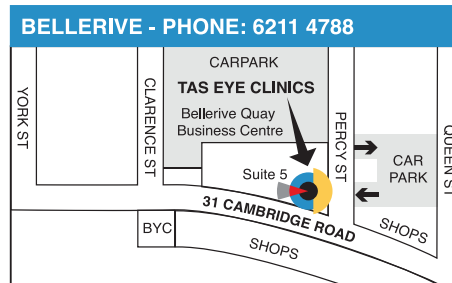
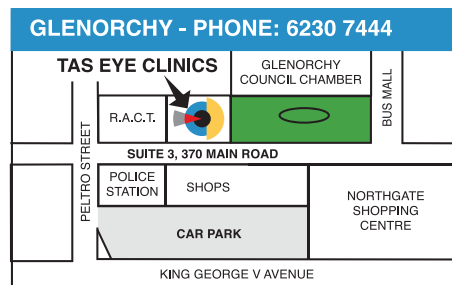
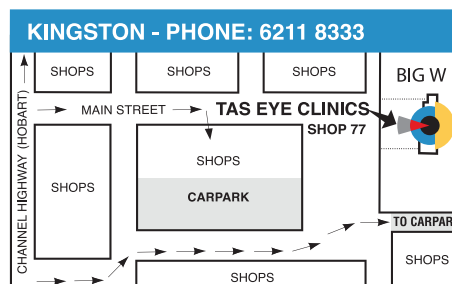
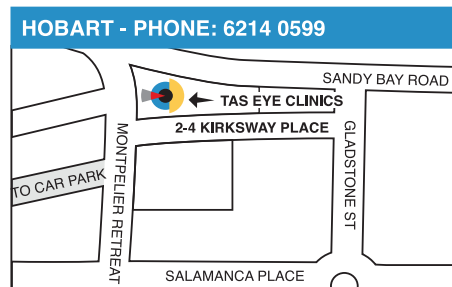
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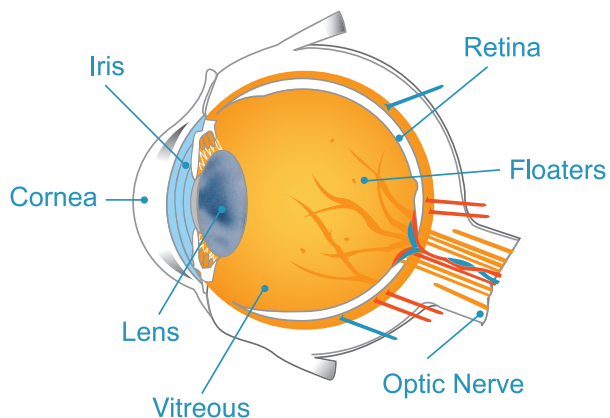
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## Floaters

Floaters, which are little discrete dark shapes that move around in our field of vision, are normal in the vast majority of the population. They are more visible when we look at a light coloured wall and they move constantly inside the eye as the vitreous jelly of the eye swirls around. The more we think about them, the more conscious we become of them, but they are essentially normal.



Some vitreous floaters, however, are much larger and have more significance. They occur in eyes where the vitreous actually degenerates.

The vitreous humour inside the eye is a sponge with small holes in it that actually soaks up water and expands. The capacity of the vitreous to swell is due to its large number of tiny holes that absorb water like an old fashioned bathroom sponge. The vitreous in a young child is quite solid, and in an elderly person is very fluid indeed.

As the vitreous ages the holes get larger and larger until eventually the vitreous "falls in on itself", causing large vitreous floaters.

Sometimes these large vitreous floaters are associated with the vitreous actually detaching itself from the retina at the back of the eye. This is referred to as a vitreous detachment. Please note, this is a completely different process to a retinal detachment.

As the vitreous detaches from the back of the eye, sometimes it will pull on the retina and create a flashing

light, which is more noticeable with head movement. Sometimes the vitreous traction on the retina will cause the retina to tear, and if this occurs blood is exuded into the vitreous cavity. This is a serious form of vitreous floaters, which can signal the beginning of retinal detachment.

In summary, minor vitreous opacities, called FLOATERS, have no great significance and they are present in the vast majority of the population. Vitreous opacities, which are larger, occur with age and sometimes these can be associated with a posterior vitreous detachment. If flashing lights occur or there is a sudden increase in the number of black floaters inside the eye, this may have serious significance. An Ophthalmologist should be consulted in this situation.