



TASMANIAN EYE CLINICS

EYE DOCTORS SPECIALISING AND CARING FOR YOUR EYES



eye TALK

with Dr Gordon Wise

Floaters & Flashing Lights

What are floaters? Floaters are clumps of fibres in the jelly of the eye behind the human lens. They are photographed by light onto the retina and appear as spots in the patient's visual field.

Are floaters normal? Yes everybody has floaters to some degree. Shortsighted people notice them more than others, and floaters tend to become more noticeable as we get older, as a result of changes in the jelly.

Does the presence of floaters ever indicate a serious medical problem? Yes, a sudden increase in floaters may indicate one of various conditions that can occur inside the eye, such as a posterior vitreous detachment, retinal detachment or inflammation.

Should patients be concerned about floaters? If the floaters are basically unchanged and the patient has had them for many years, they can probably be ignored. If, however, there is a sudden increase in the number of floaters in the eye, the patient should see an eye specialist.

Some patients complain about flashing lights in their eyes. Does this experience of flashing lights have any significance? Flashing lights can occur for a variety of reasons. They may be caused by traction on the retina with degeneration of the jelly or by inflammation of the retina. They can also occur in a more patterned way with migrainous aura.

Are flashing lights serious? They can be, as the underlying cause of flashing lights can be retinal disease.

Can anything be done about flashing lights? Flashing lights are a symptom, not a disease. If a patient has persistent flashing lights in one or both eyes, they should see an eye specialist for diagnosis and treatment.

For more information refer to our website www.taseye.com.au

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