



Retinal Detachment

The retina is the delicate lining at the back of the eye where the image you see of the world is formed and transmitted to the brain. It is the equivalent of a film in a camera.

Under certain conditions, especially with advancing age, the clear gel-like fluid (vitreous) which fills the eye can begin to recede. As it does, it can sometimes pull the retina along with it, tearing tiny holes in the fragile membrane. Left untreated, these tiny holes can fill with fluid causing the layers of the retina to separate and detach. Depending on the degree of the detachment, partial or total blindness may result.



What are the risk factors for retinal detachment?

The following conditions can increase the chance of having a retinal detachment:

- * Near sightedness (Myopia)
- * Trauma (e.g. severe knock to the eye or head)
- * Glaucoma
- * Previous retinal detachment of your other eye
- * Family history of retinal detachment



What are the symptoms of a retinal detachment?

The following symptoms may indicate a retinal detachment:

- * Flashing lights in vision. (These may be located in your central or peripheral vision)
- * New floaters. (These may be black or clear and can vary in size.)
- * A shadow in your peripheral vision
- * A grey curtain or "veil" moving across your field of vision
- * A total or partial loss of visual field

These symptoms do not always mean a retinal tear or detachment is present, however you should see your ophthalmologist as soon as possible to prevent a permanent loss of vision.

What is the treatment for a retinal detachment?

Retinal tears are commonly treated with cryotherapy or laser treatment.

In cryotherapy, a local anaesthetic is applied to the eye and a small area around the break is completely frozen with a probe.

Lasers use an intense beam of energy to seal the layers of the retina back together again.

If the retina is detached, surgery is required to fix the problem. The surgery required is extremely specialised and admission to hospital is required, sometimes urgently. The operation aims to close the holes in the retina that have caused it to detach. There are a few different approaches that the surgeon can use to achieve this. Your ophthalmologist will discuss these treatment options with you in more detail at the time of your consultation.

