



# How well *do* you see?

## About Detached Retina

### What is a detached retina?

The retina is the light-sensitive layer of tissue that lines the inside of the eye. It's responsible for sending visual messages to the brain through the optic nerve.<sup>1</sup> If the retina becomes detached, that means it has been lifted or pulled from its normal position within the eye.<sup>1</sup>

A detached retina is a medical emergency and it must be repaired promptly, or there is a risk of permanent vision loss.<sup>2</sup> Early diagnosis and treatment can preserve vision and, fortunately, there are clear warning signs for when a retina becomes detached:<sup>3</sup>

- Flashes of light<sup>2</sup>
- Seeing "floaters" (small flecks or threads)<sup>2</sup>
- Darkening of your peripheral (side) vision<sup>2</sup>

### What are the causes and risk factors?

Most of the eye's interior is filled with vitreous, a gel-like substance that takes up about 80% of the eye and helps it maintain a round shape.<sup>4</sup> The retina can thin due to aging or other retinal disorders, and can cause small holes or tears.<sup>3</sup> A detached retina occurs when the vitreous leaks through these tears or holes, and collects underneath the retina.<sup>3</sup> As liquid collects, the retina will then peel away from the underlying layer of blood vessels, potentially causing loss of vision.<sup>3</sup>

Retinal detachment is most common for people age 40 and older<sup>1</sup> and is most likely to occur in people who:

- Are extremely nearsighted<sup>1</sup>
- Experienced previous retinal detachment<sup>3</sup>
- Have had a previous eye surgery, such as cataract removal<sup>3</sup>
- Have other eye diseases or disorders<sup>1</sup>
- Experienced severe eye injury or trauma<sup>3</sup>
- Have a family history of retinal detachment<sup>1</sup>

### Can a detached retina be prevented?

A detached retina can sometimes be prevented.<sup>2</sup> An eye exam can detect changes within the eye that would not otherwise be noticeable.<sup>2</sup> Patients at risk should have annual comprehensive eye exams.<sup>2</sup>



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## What are the treatment options?

If a retinal tear has not yet progressed to detachment, an eye care professional (ECP) can recommend laser surgery or a freezing method (cryopexy) to repair the hole.<sup>3</sup> These procedures create a scar to help seal the retina to the back of the eye,<sup>5</sup> preventing fluid from traveling through the tear and under the retina.<sup>5</sup>

Surgery is typically required when patients have a retinal detachment in order to place it back in its proper position within the eye. These options include pneumatic retinopexy, scleral buckling or a vitrectomy.<sup>3</sup>

1. National Eye Institute, Facts About Retinal Detachment, <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/retinaldetach/retinaldetach.asp#a> [Accessed June 27, 2014]
2. WebMD, Eye Health and Retinal Detachment. <http://www.webmd.com/eye-health/eye-health-retinal-detachment> [Accessed June 27, 2014]
3. Mayo Clinic, Diseases and Conditions, Retinal detachment. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/retinal-detachment/basics/definition/con-20022595?p=1> [Accessed June 27, 2014]
4. National Eye Institute, Facts About Macular Hole. <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/macularhole/macularhole.asp> [Accessed June 27, 2014]



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