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.¹ If the retina becomes detached, that means it has been lifted or pulled from its normal position within the eye.¹

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

- Flashes of light²
- Seeing “floaters” (small flecks or threads)²
- Darkening of your peripheral (side) vision²

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.⁴ The retina can thin due to aging or other retinal disorders, and can cause small holes or tears.³ A detached retina occurs when the vitreous leaks through these tears or holes, and collects underneath the retina.³ As liquid collects, the retina will then peel away from the underlying layer of blood vessels, potentially causing loss of vision.³

Retinal detachment is most common for people age 40 and older¹ and is most likely to occur in people who:

- Are extremely nearsighted¹
- Experienced previous retinal detachment³
- Have had a previous eye surgery, such as cataract removal³
- Have other eye diseases or disorders¹
- Experienced severe eye injury or trauma³
- Have a family history of retinal detachment¹

Can a detached retina be prevented?
A detached retina can sometimes be prevented.² An eye exam can detect changes within the eye that would not otherwise be noticeable.² Patients at risk should have annual comprehensive eye exams.²
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. These procedures create a scar to help seal the retina to the back of the eye, preventing fluid from traveling through the tear and under the retina.

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.