

Look out for:

- flashes or floaters getting worse;
- a black shadow in your vision;
- a sudden cloud of spots;
- a curtain or veil over your vision; and/or
- any sudden loss of vision.

It is especially important to have your eyes examined straight-away if you begin to see flashes or floaters for the first time, if they seem to change or if you notice them in increased numbers. Prompt examination can reduce the risk of permanent visual loss. You can be examined as an NHS patient by the Accident and Emergency Department.

If you wish, we can check your eyes quickly and effectively in an emergency appointment here in the practice as a private patient. Just ask any of our team for details.

*Information produced by the College of Optometrists in conjunction with the Association of Optometrists*

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## Red Eye or Conjunctivitis & Flashes and Floaters

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OPTOMETRISTS

## Red Eye or Conjunctivitis

If your eyes are red you may have 'conjunctivitis' - inflammation of the thin membrane covering The front of the eye and the lining of the eyelids.

The main symptoms of conjunctivitis are red watery eyes, inflamed inner eyelids, blurred vision, An uncomfortable, scratchy feeling and, sometimes, a sticky or watery substance that can make your eyelashes stick together. This might make it difficult to open the eyes when you wake up, and your vision may distort slightly when you blink.

There are three types of conjunctivitis you may contract, as part of an illness such as colds, measles or influenza or for no apparent reason.

### Infectious conjunctivitis

Infectious conjunctivitis may be caused by bacteria or by a virus. It can occur in one eye, but Often spreads to both as it may be very contagious. If you wear contact lenses you must seek Advice because the lenses may have become contaminated. You should not wear contact lenses as they will irritate the condition, and should wash your hands frequently to prevent re-infection. It is also a good idea for other members of the family to use separate towels whilst you have the infection. If your new-born baby has conjunctivitis it requires urgent medical attention.

In most cases, your tears will cure a mild infection on their own, but if not then you will require treatment, which will depend on the cause of the disease.

### Allergic and chemical conjunctivitis

Allergic conjunctivitis is caused by an allergy to dust or pollen, cosmetics, animals or fabrics. Exposure to intense light from welding equipment can lead to a marked conjunctivitis known as Arc eye or welder's flash.

Chemical conjunctivitis may occur after exposure to irritants such as air pollution, noxious fumes and chlorine in swimming pools.

If the cause of the allergy is known, then it is best to avoid the irritant, and avoid wearing contact lenses, which will add to the irritation.

If the symptoms persist, prescription or over-the-counter eye drops may relieve discomfort.

**As conjunctivitis can develop into a more serious condition that could harm your vision you should make an appointment to see your optometrist promptly for diagnosis and treatment.**

## Flashes and Floaters

Often, people who have healthy eyes see floaters. They appear as spots, lines or cobweb effects, usually when you look at a plain surface such as a white wall or a clear blue sky. They often appear when the clear jelly in the main part of your eye gets older. Sometimes the jelly in the main part of your eye shrinks a little and tugs on the retina (the light-sensitive layer) at the back of your eye. This can cause flashes of light at the edge of your vision. These differ from the disturbance of vision that can occur with migraine.

If you suddenly notice a shower of new floaters, or floaters along with flashes or a dark shadow or "curtain" in your vision, then you should seek advice urgently. These symptoms can mean that the retina is tearing and so we advise you to have a detailed eye examination straight away. Go to an Accident and Emergency Department if necessary.

The retina is at the back of your eye. It receives the images and sends them to the brain. This is one of the things that enable you to see. If the retina tears, it may come away from the back wall of the eye. This is called retinal detachment. It can result in partial or complete loss of vision.

A tear may be treated by using a laser. If treated quickly, you may have a better chance of full recovery. However, if your retina has become detached, you will need surgery. The operation may restore most of your vision but may come too late for a full recovery.

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