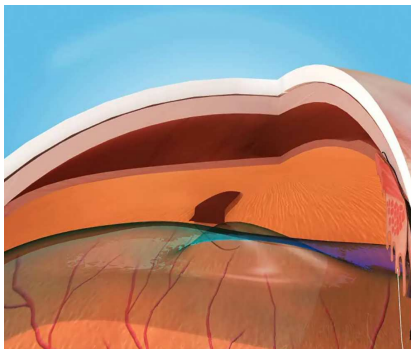


## DETACHED RETINA

### Q What is a retinal detachment?

A The retina is a thin layer of nerve tissue at the back of your eye. Its function is to transform the optical image formed on it into nerve impulses which are then sent to the brain where they are analysed and eventually result in vision.

The retina is loosely attached to underlying tissue which lines the inside wall of the eyeball.



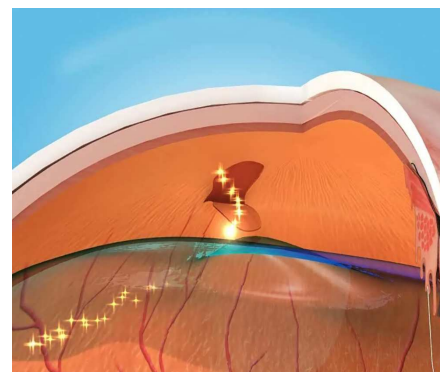
A retinal detachment occurs when this retina becomes separated from the underlying layer. If this happens, the retina is starved of the oxygen and nutrients that it needs and ceases to function properly and a blind spot appears in a corresponding part of the visual field. If not treated immediately, the detachment can spread resulting in complete blindness in the affected eye.

Retinal detachment affects approximately 1 in 10,000 people. It can happen spontaneously or as a result of a blow to the eye or head. It is more common amongst older people and those who are short-sighted.

### Q What are the symptoms?

A The most common symptom associated with a retinal detachment is a loss of vision out of the corner of one eye. This is often described as a shadow or a black curtain spreading across the visual field. You may also experience flashing bright lights or dark spots (floaters) in your vision.

There is no pain associated with a retinal detachment.



Similar symptoms can occur in migraine. However, the flashing lights and blind spots in migraine are usually in both eyes

and disappear after about one hour. Retinal detachment usually occurs in one eye. However, if it does affect one of your eyes, there is a one in ten chance that it will happen in your other eye as well at a later stage.

**Q What should I do if I think that I have had a retinal detachment?**

**A** If you begin to experience these symptoms you should consult your optometrist or GP **immediately**. If you experience these symptoms outside normal working hours, you should consider going to your local casualty department. Having these symptoms does not always mean that your retina has detached. However, it is sensible to be cautious because prompt treatment for retinal detachment minimises the damage to your eye.

**Q What is the treatment?**

**A** Retinal tears and detachment can generally be treated successfully if detected within a few hours of them occurring. The longer the delay in receiving treatment,

the less likely it is that vision can be fully restored.

Retinal holes or tears can be treated with either lasers or cryotherapy (freezing treatment). Both treatments work by making the eye create scar tissue that then seals the hole. These procedures are usually carried out under local anaesthetic.

However, if retinal detachment has occurred, the only way of reattaching the retina is with surgery. If the retina is not reattached, a complete loss of vision is almost certain.

An improvement in vision should be noticeable during the weeks following the surgery. However, your eyesight cannot always be completely restored. This depends largely on how much of the retina was detached, and for how long.