



Ythan Opticians

Professional Eye Care

Retinal detachment

What is retinal detachment?

The eye is shaped like a ball. The retina is a fine sheet of nerve tissue lining the inside of the eye. Rays of light enter the eye and are focused onto the retina by the cornea and the lens. The retina produces a picture which is sent along the optic nerve for the brain to interpret. The eye and the brain together produce the images that we see.

Retinal detachments often develop in eyes with retinas weakened by a hole or tear. This allows fluid to seep underneath, weakening the attachment so that the retina becomes detached. When detached, the retina cannot compose a clear picture from the incoming rays of light and vision becomes blurred and dim.

Retinal detachment is quite uncommon with only around one person in ten thousand being affected. It is more frequent in middle aged, short sighted people but rare in young adults.

Symptoms

The most common symptom is a shadow spreading across the vision of one eye. You may also experience bright flashes of light and/or showers of dark spots called floaters. These symptoms are never painful.

Many people experience flashes or floaters and these are not necessarily a cause for alarm. However, if they are severe and seem to be getting worse and you are losing vision, then you should seek optometric advice immediately. Prompt treatment can often minimise the damage to your eye.

Treatment

If treatment is sought early on, it may only be necessary to have laser or freezing treatment which is usually performed under a local anaesthetic.

Frequently, however, an operation will be needed to repair a hole or put the retina back in place is usually done under a general anaesthetic. In about 75 per cent of cases the retina can be repaired with a single operation.