

FAQ's for Laser Vitreolysis (Floater Removal Procedure)

Is this a new procedure?

This procedure has been around for almost twenty years beginning in Europe. We use an FDA-approved laser, although the procedure is an off-label use of the laser.

How does the laser work?

The YAG laser concentrates energy onto the floater itself effectively vaporizing the material. The molecules are converted to a gas micro bubble. The gas is absorbed and disappears after a few hours.

Does it hurt?

The vitreous (jelly-like substance in the back of the eye) has no nerves or blood supply. The laser itself is painless. There is an awareness of a brief flash of light and some snapping sounds. There is sometimes a slight irritation to the surface of the eye from the special lens used to help visualize the floater. It is usually completely resolved by the next morning.

How long does it take? Am I awake?

The patient is fully awake and sitting at a slit-lamp-like device we use in the office to look at your eye. Sedatives are not necessary. A typical treatment session may take 10-30 minutes with one or two brief breaks offered.

Don't the floaters move around?

Yes and no. A special contact lens is used to stabilize the eye. The laser can be focused to the fraction of millimeter accuracy. At other times I will have the patient intentionally move the eye to get peripheral floaters to move centrally.

Doesn't the laser just break up the floater into smaller ones?

Generally, no. The strategy is to vaporize the material so that there is less mass and volume of the floater material. A beneficial side-effect is that if some residual floaters fragments are small enough and far enough from the retina, they will not cast a shadow either.

Does medical insurance cover the procedure?

Partially. There is a CPT code (67031) "*Laser Severing of Vitreous Strands.*" Insurance companies basically since this procedure as elective so they may only reimburse \$100 - \$300.

Do you accept insurance payment?

Because of the unpredictability of insurance reimbursing this procedure, we don't process insurance. We will provide documentation to you to submit to their carrier.

What is the fee?

\$295-\$195 for the initial examination. The treatment fee is \$3000 per eye. Touch-up procedure within first year is \$2000 per eye.

How many treatments are necessary?

Most people will need between 1-3 total treatments. It is rare and only in the most extreme situations that we have had to performed more than 3 treatments.

Is it dangerous?

We have never seen an elevated pressure or intraocular inflammation from this procedure. There has been one retinal detachment (not mine) which is an acceptably low risk and less than with other laser treatments.

What are the results?

We usually quote around 60% or greater improvement with one treatment, which is low and conservative. Most patients notice such an improvement that 80-90% just have the one treatment, even though a secondary treatment might even further decrease the presence of floaters. Therefore, I would say 80-90% satisfaction level with a single treatment.