

Visual Snow



What is Visual Snow Syndrome?

Visual Snow Syndrome ('VS') is a devastating neurological condition that can affect an individual's vision, hearing, cognitive and other functioning. A [landmark study published in 2014](#) proposed diagnostic criteria which provides the best definition of VS. According to the study, patients must have:

- Visual snow (i.e. dynamic, continuous, tiny dots in their entire visual field) for three months, and

At least two of the following four categories of additional symptoms (which are explained and illustrated on the [symptoms page](#)):

- Palinopsia (afterimages or trailing),
- Enhanced entoptic phenomena (floaters, blue-field entoptic phenomena, self-light of the eye or spontaneous photopsia)
- Photophobia (light sensitivity), and
- Nyctalopia (impaired night vision).

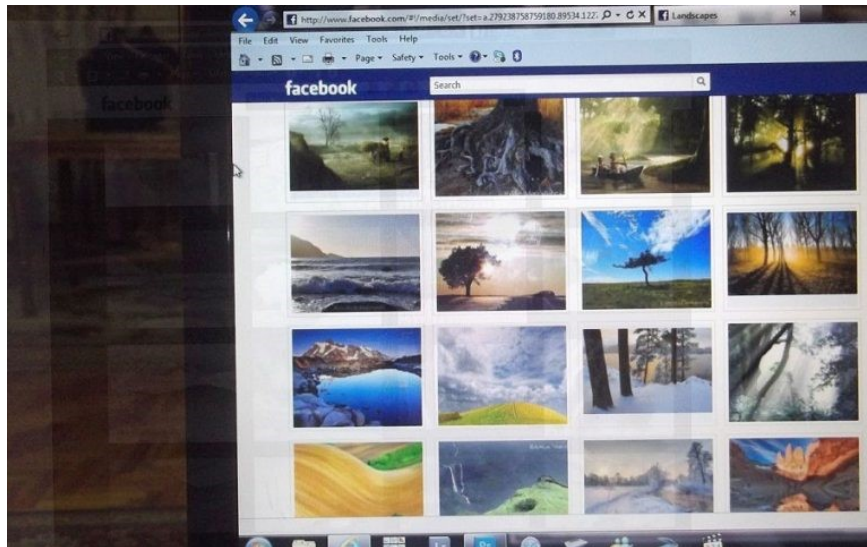
Additionally, their symptoms must not be:

- Consistent with a typical migraine visual aura (i.e. a migraine that produces visual symptoms), or
- Attributable to another disorder (i.e. the patient's eye exams produce normal results, and they have not taken any psychotropic drugs).

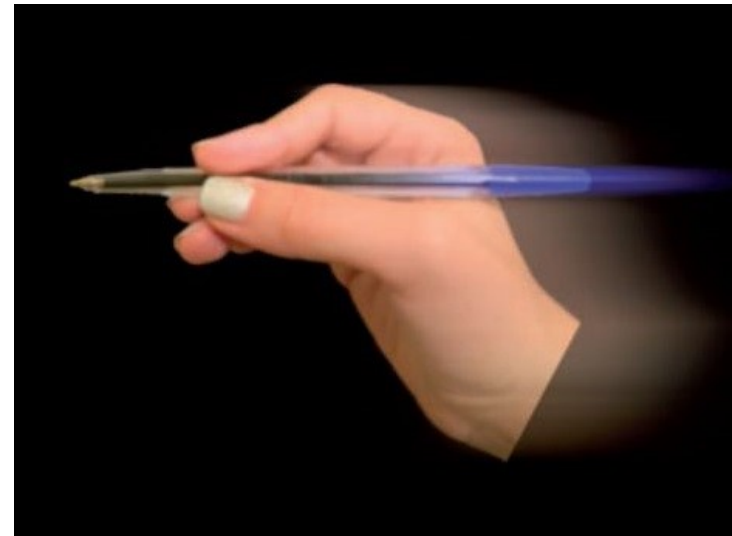
Most patients experience many other additional symptoms; these are also explained and illustrated on the [symptoms page](#). VS affects a patient's vision 24/7, which means that they never have any relief from it – even when they close their eyes. Currently, there is no cure for the disease and it is yet to receive widespread recognition within the medical profession.

Palinopsia refers to either excessive 'after-images' or 'trailing'. Patients may experience both or just one of these forms of palinopsia.

Afterimages



Trailing



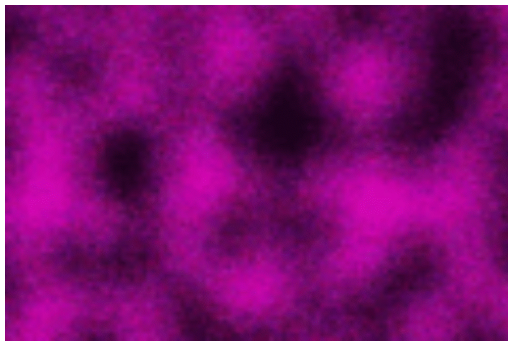
Entoptic phenomena are visual phenomena that arise from the structure of the eye itself. Healthy subjects experience entoptic phenomena, but Visual Snow Syndrome sufferers experience them to an excessive extent. There are four key entoptic phenomena: floaters, blue-field entoptic phenomenon, self-light of the eye and spontaneous photopsia. Sufferers only have to experience one of these excessively to satisfy this aspect of the VS diagnostic criteria.

Floaters



Self-light of the eye (a.k.a. 'closed-eye hallucinations')

Visual Snow Syndrome patients may experience coloured (usually violet or orange) 'swirls, clouds or waves' when their eyes are closed. They are particularly noticeable in the first ten minutes or so of exposure to darkness (e.g. when going to bed). It is unclear exactly what part of the eye causes this and to what extent healthy people experience it, but it is definitely a distinct symptom of VS.



Blue-field entoptic phenomenon (BFEP or 'Scheerer's phenomenon')

This phenomenon is where you can see small white blood cells (called 'leucocytes') traveling on a wiggly path within your eyes. Whilst healthy subjects would only see a handful of these when looking at the blue sky, VS patients may see many more of these leucocytes, even when not looking at a blue sky (such as indoors on a white or cream-coloured wall).



Spontaneous photopsia

VS patients experience bright flashes or blobs of light in their vision. These occur randomly and come in different shapes and sizes.





Photophobia is generally where patients avoid light because it is too bright or painful. Some Visual Snow Syndrome sufferers experience photophobia to such an extent that going outside on a remotely sunny day is far too difficult, meaning that they are often housebound. Due to photophobia, those with VS typically wear sunglasses even when it is not that sunny.

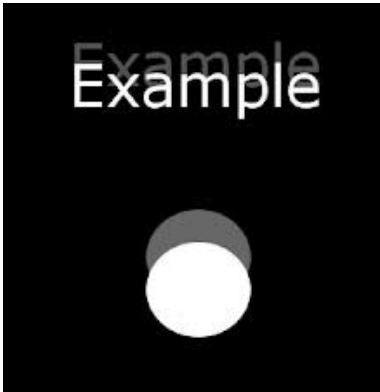


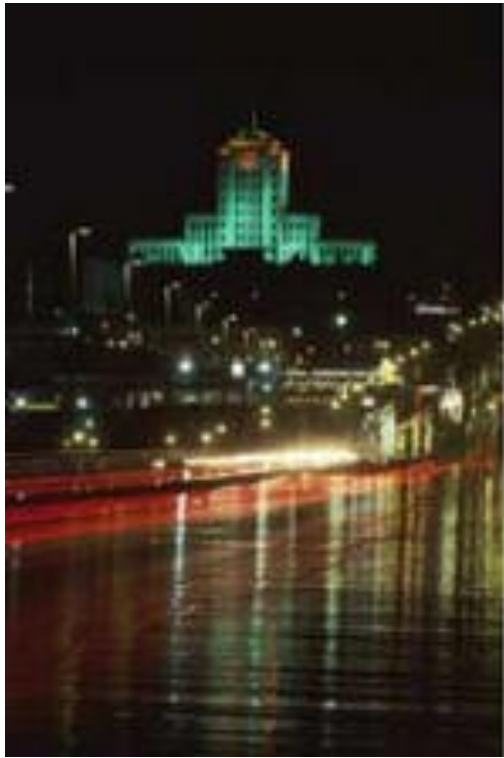
Nyctalopia (Night Blindness)
For many Visual Snow Syndrome sufferers, it is difficult or impossible to see in relatively low light, typically due to the visual snow, palinopsia, halos, loss of contrast sensitivity (see below), or a combination of the four. Activities such as driving at night or even navigating around a dark room at night can be difficult.

Additional Symptoms

Visual Snow Syndrome patients often experience the following symptoms which, due to being slightly less prevalent and the need to have a manageable clinical definition of VS, do not feature in VS' di-

for the to and you cat is look up my not dog play see come
see the look dog and not is you come up to my for cat play
not up play my is dog you come look for see and to the cat
to not cat for look is my and up come play you see the dog
my play see to for you is the look up cat not dog come and
you look see and play to the is cat not come for my up dog
come see the play look up is cat not my and dog for you to
come not to play look the and dog see is cat up you for my
up come look for the not dog cat you to see is and my play
and is for dog come see the cat up look you play my not to
look to for my come play the dog see you not cat up and is
the come to up cat my see dog you not look is play and for
the cat up dog and is play come cat you see for not to look my
dog you cat to and play for not come up the see look my is
is you dog for not cat my look come and up to play see the
look up come and is my cat not dog you see for to play the
play come see cat not look dog is my up the for to and you
my you is look the dog play see not come and to cat for up
you for the and not see my play come is look dog cat to up
dog to you and play cat up is my not come for the look see







SEEING DIFFERENTLY

I always thought I saw things differently from other people. I recently learned why that is more true than I realized.

I have experienced Visual Snow Syndrome for as long as I can remember, but I really couldn't explain what I saw because nobody around me knew about it. Later as an adult, I relayed what I saw to family and friends, only to find that it seemed like I was the only one. Since it was normal for me I considered that maybe I just couldn't explain it well. I used to think I was actually seeing the molecules of objects.

Recently, I was looking for answers to some technical problem, so I searched for an IT guy that I had learned from before. In looking through his videos on YouTube, I came across his discovery of something that had also bothered him his whole life. He described Visual Snow Syndrome and most of his experiences were exactly like mine. He posted a link of a foundation in the UK that perfectly explained the syndrome he and I have.

The name comes from the static that occurred on the old analog TV screens that those of us born before 1980 know as "snow", those moving dots that vaguely resemble snow flurries all over the TV. We may have to find a new name since anyone under 40 may not even know what I'm talking about.

Some of the things I see or maybe I should say perceive, are the moving dots on just about everything I look at, a ghostlike trail after some things

as they leave my line of sight, movement in my mind's eye when I close my eyes, and now in my older years faltering night vision. All of these issues, and many more are typical of Visual Snow Syndrome.

Here are some websites that have good information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQWE1l0LZp0>

<https://www.visualsnowinitiative.org/>

<https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/visual-snow-syndrome/>

<http://visualsnowsyndrome.com/>

<https://www.visualsnowinitiative.org/2018-visual-snow-conference/>

If you or anyone you know has experienced the above symptoms, I would be happy to share more of what I have experienced and learned.

You can reach me in Facebook PM or deda@dedamaldonado.com.

Deda Maldonado