

Clearing up America's Vision: An In-Depth Look at LASIK

By Susan Locke, M.D.

LASIK (laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis) is the most common refractive surgery. A cutting laser reshapes the cornea, allowing light rays to focus more precisely on your retina. The goal of the surgery is to produce sharper and clearer vision, often reducing or eliminating the need for corrective eyeglasses or contact lens in 80% of patients.

LASIK is often appropriate for individuals with a moderate degree of nearsightedness (myopia), farsightedness (hyperopia) or astigmatism (disrupted focus of near and distant vision).

LASIK is performed under local anesthesia in less than 30 minutes. Patients can expect to wait 2-3 months until the eyes heal completely and vision stabilizes. Eyes may itch, burn and/or water post-surgery. Additionally, blurred vision may occur immediately after surgery.

As with any surgery, there are potential risks, including:

- Undercorrection
- Overcorrection
- Astigmatism
- Glare, halos and/or double vision
- Dry eyes
- Infections, excess tears and/or swelling.

Most people in their 40s or older with presbyopia (difficulty reading small print) adjust by wearing reading glasses. However, LASIK is a possibility; your vision can be corrected for monovision. With monovision, your dominant eye is corrected for distant vision

and the other for near vision. Not everyone is able to adjust to or tolerate monovision. A trial with contact lenses is recommended before having a permanent surgical procedure.

LASIK surgery carries higher risks if you have immune system disease, an uneven corneal surface, abnormally shaped cornea, unstable vision or persistent dry eyes. LASIK surgery may not be the best choice if:

- Your job requires precise vision
- Your finances cannot cover the cost (most insurance policies do not cover LASIK)
- You actively participate in contact sports
- You have severe nearsightedness
- Your vision is fairly good – it may not be worth the risk
- You have large pupils – after LASIK surgery you may develop symptoms of halos, glare or ghost images.

The decision to have eye surgery is one worth the research and the added assurance of knowing you are being treated with the most advanced technology there is. To find out whether you are a good candidate for LASIK surgery, consult your ophthalmologist or call Healthnetwork for a referral to one of the most-respected eye centers in the nation where your eyesight will be in good hands.

One Call Starts It All
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