

LASIK INFORMATION



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IS LASIK RIGHT FOR ME?

Have you ever misplaced your eye glasses? Had a contact lens fall out? You may want to consider LASIK surgery.

Laser-assisted *in situ* keratomileusis (LASIK) is a popular eye surgery that can treat nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism.

Before you decide to have LASIK surgery, talk to your regular eye doctor about whether or not it is right for you. Laser eye surgery might not be the best option if your eye glasses or contact lens prescription is still changing. People with thin corneas or with certain medical conditions, such as dry eyes, might not be good LASIK candidates either.

But for many people, LASIK surgery can eliminate the hassle of dealing with eye glasses or contact lenses while doing a number of common activities. It is also a popular treatment for people who have trouble wearing contacts because of allergies.

Doctors perform about 700,000 LASIK surgeries a year in the United States, and millions of LASIK procedures have been performed since the eye surgery was approved by the FDA 15 years ago.

WHAT IS LASIK

LASIK is the most common laser vision correction surgery. It begins with the creation of a very thin flap of tissue into the stroma. A surgeon uses a microkeratome blade (this is called Bladed LASIK) or a femtosecond laser (this is called Bladeless LASIK) to make the flap. After the flap is created, a type of laser called an excimer laser is used to reshape the cornea, which corrects the person's refractive error. Bladeless LASIK is preferred by many eye doctors, and research has suggested it is safer than Bladed LASIK.

What is Bladeless LASIK?

LASIK eye surgery is a common procedure used to correct eye problems, such as nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. All three are conditions that affect the eye's ability to focus on objects near and far away. Part of the LASIK procedure requires an eye surgeon to create a hinged flap of tissue, which can be done with either a blade or a laser. The importance of this step in the LASIK procedure cannot be overstated.

So what's the difference?

The first and most obvious difference is that traditional LASIK eye surgery uses a thin blade called a microkeratome to make an incision in the cornea, which creates the hinged flap. This thin protective flap of tissue allows the cornea to heal quickly and naturally once the procedure is finished, with little to no discomfort.

The Bladeless LASIK option utilizes a precise, high-energy femtosecond laser instead of a microkeratome blade to create the flap of corneal tissue. Since being invented in the 1990s, the femtosecond laser has been incredibly successful. This laser continues to provide LASIK patients and their eye doctors with a bladeless alternative to traditional laser eye surgery.

Is Bladeless LASIK safe?

Both Bladed LASIK and Bladeless LASIK are proven safe and effective, but the bladeless femtosecond procedure has a number of important advantages. Bladeless LASIK, for example, has a lower risk of corneal flap complications.

Some LASIK patients need a second procedure, which laser eye surgeons call a “touch up” or an “enhancement.” Bladeless LASIK allows for a safer enhancement should it be needed.

What’s best for me?

Laser eye surgeons and their patients have come to find that both Bladed and Bladeless LASIK procedures are among the safest medical procedures in modern medicine.

Every patient is different. Although Bladeless LASIK has many advantages for many patients, it isn’t always the best option. Consult an experienced laser eye surgery center to find out which method is right for you.

COMMON FEARS ABOUT LASIK

LASIK fear is among the most common reasons that people shy away from the procedure.

1. Fear of being awake during surgery

LASIK begins with numbing eye drops, and sometimes a mild sedative, to help you relax. Still, some patients notice mild discomfort, such as pressure, vibration or dimmed vision, during the procedure. You don’t have to worry about blinking, though, because a specially designed instrument holds your eye open. And a computer in the laser tracks your eye movement more than 4,000 times per second, ensuring precision. In 15 minutes or less, both eyes can be done with little discomfort. If you can stare straight ahead for 45 seconds, you can do this.

2. Fear of LASIK cost

A second common LASIK fear is the cost of LASIK. A LASIK price typically covers the initial consultation with eye exam, state-of-the-art lasers, highly trained eye surgeons, personalized aftercare and a lifetime commitment. The cost of LASIK can seem costly at first glance, but a lot is rolled into that final price. Some insurance plans cover a portion of LASIK, too, and a variety of payment options and discounts are available. Some patients estimate that their cost of LASIK pays for itself within a few years because of their saved costs in eye glasses, contact lenses and contact-lens solution. With proper planning, LASIK can fit into even a tight budget.

3. Fear of complications

A third popular LASIK fear is fear of complications. True, LASIK comes with some risks. Details of possible risks can be found here. Yet no surgery—not even a routine one such as filling a cavity—comes without some

risks. Choosing the most advanced laser technology and a highly experienced, reputable surgeon can reduce the risk of complications. In addition, individual qualities, such as cornea thickness and ocular health, can reduce risks even further. At your LASIK consultation, your eye doctor will discuss any risks and complications with you. Elect for the procedure only if you feel comfortable with the risks of LASIK.

YOUR LASIK APPOINTMENT

The first step in having laser eye surgery is scheduling an evaluation during which a trained eye doctor evaluates your candidacy for laser eye surgery, such as LASIK. After a thorough discussion and a non-invasive eye exam, the doctor will be able to determine if laser eye surgery is right for you.

Your doctor will likely tell you to stop using contact lenses weeks leading up to your evaluation. Contact lenses distort the shape of the cornea, and your doctor will want your cornea to have returned to its natural shape by the day of your Laser Eye Surgery consultation.

Your eye doctor will ask about your use of eye glasses and contacts, the reasons you want LASIK, and your expectations after the procedure is performed. Some patients hope laser eye surgery will leave them totally independent from eye glasses and contacts, but this isn't realistic. Most adults will need reading glasses by a certain age, for instance.

Your consulting eye doctor will also want to know about your health history. General health conditions, such as diabetes or an autoimmune disease, and ocular health conditions, such as dry eyes or ocular herpes, can affect whether or not you are a candidate for laser eye surgery and how you will recover after the procedure.

Some medications, such as common migraine pills, can also affect healing. These and other lifestyle factors—including playing contact sports or consuming alcohol and drugs—can also influence candidacy. Your doctor might ask about any of these things to better understand your candidacy for Laser Eye Surgery.

Your consultation continues with a very comprehensive eye exam. This exam will include tests such as pupil dilation and prescription measurement. But the doctor will also use some tests that are specific to the world of laser vision correction. He/she will measure your cornea in detail, including its thickness, curvature and topography. She might perform a tear-film test to check for dry eyes. Each test will be explained before it is performed, and all of them are painless.

Once the eye exam is finished, you and your eye doctor will discuss the results and your candidacy for laser eye surgery. Patients who are good candidates for eye surgery will get a chance to ask questions about the procedure the doctor believes is best for their eyes.