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## **GENERAL INFORMATION ON INFORMED CONSENT**

It is our hope to fully inform you concerning the side effects, limitations and complications of LASIK and PRK surgery. We continually strive to balance the benefits of laser surgery with the known and unknown risks. Our goal is to give you the maximal amount of satisfaction and safety but patients also must accept a certain amount of risk and responsibility.

Patients are often surprised and upset by the extent to which we attempt to inform them of the potential complications of laser surgery. It is not our intention to frighten or dissuade someone from pursuing laser surgery, as most of our patients will never encounter any serious complications, and the vast majority are thrilled with the improvement of their vision. It is our intention to accurately outline the associated risks to all candidates so that they may either elect not to accept the risks or to be better prepared to deal with any unexpected complications or side effects which may arise. Laser Vision Correction is a purely elective procedure. **The only way to avoid all surgical risk is not proceeding with the surgery.**

## **ALTERNATIVES TO LASER VISION CORRECTION**

If you decide not to have surgery, eyeglasses, contact lenses and intra-ocular lenses may also be used to correct your vision.

## **BACKGROUND**

Laser vision correction includes both LASIK and PRK. Both procedures are available to treat near sightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. In both forms of laser vision correction (LVC), the transparent cornea at the front of the eyes reshaped using your prescription. The excimer laser produces a cool beam of ultraviolet light energy, capable of removing very precise amounts of corneal tissue to change the shape or curvature of the cornea and improve your vision.

In the **LASIK** procedure, a protective corneal flap is created on a hinge. Once the flap is lifted the laser reshapes the corneal layers beneath the flap. The flap is then placed back into its original position. Since the corneal surface is untouched by the laser, minimal discomfort is felt after the procedure, less healing time is required and your eyesight rapidly improves overnight.

In **PRK**, there is no flap and the laser is applied to the surface of the cornea once the top protective layer (epithelium) is removed. The surface layers of the cornea completely regenerate but are more sensitive than the deeper layers that are lasered. For this reason patients can experience more discomfort post operatively and there is a longer recovery time. However, since there is no flap used in PRK, more corneal tissue is preserved and risk of a flap complication is eliminated.

Laser vision correction is primarily used to correct your distance vision. Most people, as they age will require the use of reading glasses for near vision. This condition is called presbyopia and is normal and expected in all individuals.

After surgery, you may feel that even though your vision is improved after LVC it is still not "perfect". It is not realistic to expect that your vision will be perfect at all times and that glasses may be needed to refine what you see. We will make every attempt to leave you satisfied and improve your vision, but we may be limited in what we can achieve. Patient satisfaction is very closely related to realistic expectations.

## **RISKS**

The flap creating device could malfunction during the procedure. This may or may not be accompanied by visual loss. We may decide not to move forward with the procedure if I feel that there may be an increased risk of complications.

If the flap heals incorrectly, it may distort your vision. If the flap is misaligned or wrinkled, you may need to return to the laser center and have it relifted and repaired. Rarely, this may cause permanent vision damage.

After the LASIK procedure, epithelial cells may grow underneath the flap (*epithelial ingrowth*). Most cases of ingrowth do not need to be treated and can just be observed but if the vision is affected then the flap may need to be relifted and the cells cleared away. Rarely, this may cause permanent vision damage.

Corneal inflammation (keratitis) rarely can occur after LASIK and may need to be treated with topical steroid drops for a few days. If you do not respond to the medications, you may need to take oral medications and have the flap relifted. In very rare cases this may cause permanent vision damage.

Prior to the procedure there are several tests done to measure your risk in developing corneal instability. Some of these risk factors include age, corneal thickness, corneal shape and degree of nearsightedness and astigmatism. In rare instances after laser vision correction, the cornea may become too thinned and its normal architecture may become unstable. This may lead to blurry vision and you may need to return to glasses or require additional procedure to stabilize your vision. LASIK requires more corneal tissue to be removed and therefore, may increase your risk for this complication versus PRK.

In rare instances after PRK surgery corneal haze can develop. In order to prevent this complication we use a diluted form of an anti-scarring medication on your eye immediately after surgery and place you on a mild topical steroid for a few weeks. It is important that you follow the instructions on how to use drops. A small percentage of people placed on topical steroids may have an increase in their eye pressure therefore, it is important to follow up with your surgeon on regular intervals to have your pressure checked.

During the immediate postoperative periods, patients can experience some foreign body sensation, pain, sensitivity to bright lights, blurred vision, tearing, drying and fluctuation of your vision. These symptoms typically resolve very quickly after LASIK but may take a few extra days after PRK.

Although the procedure is done in complete sterile conditions, infections may occur and may need to be treated. If severe, permanent scarring may occur which could lead to loss of vision and possible corneal transplantation.

After the procedure, there may be an increased risk of dry eyes. Typically, these symptoms are temporary but on rare occasions may be permanent and may require the frequent applications of artificial tears and closure of the tear duct openings.

Overcorrection and under correction can occur and may lead to blurry vision. This can usually be treated with an enhancement procedure once the vision becomes stable. You may need to wear glasses temporarily.

In rare instances some patients may experience glare, halos or "star bursting" around lights. These symptoms may interfere with your night vision. While we cannot predict who will experience these symptoms, some doctors believe that large pupils or high degrees of correction may increase your risk. Typically, these problems are temporary but for some individuals they may be permanent.

With age, there is a natural tendency for the eyelids to droop. Eye surgery may hasten this process.

In some instances the vision gained from LVC could regress. This may require an enhancement procedure or the use of glasses in the future.

If you are or may be pregnant, you should not have LVC performed.

**PLEASE COPY AND SIGN:**

**I have read the informed consent provided to me and understand that Laser Vision Correction is an elective procedure. I understand that while this procedure is safe and effective for most people there are risks and no guarantees.**

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