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What is LASIK?

LASIK utilizes a laser tool to safely and accurately reshape the cornea to correct farsightedness (hyperopia), nearsightedness (myopia) and astigmatism. After numbing the patient's eyes, the physician uses a device, known as a microkeratome, to cut a thin flap in the surface of the cornea. After lifting the flap, the doctor uses the laser to reshape the cornea to improve vision. The flap is then closed and covered with a protective contact lens. In most cases, vision is restored to a perfect 20/20.

Is it possible to need your vision improved and not be a candidate for Lasik?

There are some patients who would benefit from vision correction, but unfortunately are not candidates for LASIK. If a patient has a cataract, corneal tissue irregularity or an out-of-range prescription (meaning they require considerable correction or very little correction), they may very well not be candidates for LASIK. However, individuals who are not candidates for LASIK often do very well with a similar procedure, PRK Laser Surgery.

What are the differences between LASIK and PRK Surgery?

Both procedures have excellent success rates in appropriate candidates. LASIK involves cutting the cornea which, in rare cases, can result in complications and the need for an additional procedure. Also, as mentioned, some people are not candidates for LASIK due to certain eye conditions. Since there is no cutting involved in PRK, people who are not candidates for LASIK often opt for PRK. Both procedures use the same laser and pose little risk, but the healing times differ slightly. LASIK patients often have 100 percent of their sight restored in 24 hours; PRK patients require a bit more downtime — 36 to 72 hours.

What are the risks involved in LASIK surgery?

In some patients, vision is not 100 percent corrected after the procedure. There are several reasons why this may occur. As such, the biggest risk of LASIK is some patients may require an additional procedure that, in almost all cases, restores 100 percent vision correction. Ectasia is a warping of the cornea that may occur as a result of the LASIK procedure. This can occur because the procedure can weaken the corneal architecture. (However, tests completed prior to surgery attempt to identify people who are at risk for ectasia.) Additionally, dry eye syndrome is a risk of LASIK; again, however, the physician can usually predict this outcome and alert the patient before surgery.

Is there any pain involved in LASIK?

There is no pain since the eyes are completely numb. However, patients often report discomfort during the procedure because suction is used, along with a speculum to hold the eyes open. There is pressure, but no pain.

What is the recovery time?

Immediately after LASIK, patients should expect blurry vision. They are advised to go home and take a nap to promote healing. After six to eight hours, patients should have 75 to 80 percent of vision restored. After a good night's sleep, they will wake up with 20/20 vision — able to return to work and resume normal activities. All patients will have to use eye drops for about a week after the procedure to continue to promote healing.

What percentage of patients get positive results?

If patients are appropriately screened as candidates for LASIK, the success rate is excellent.

Michael Nejat, MD, is a board-certified ophthalmologist and is fellowship trained in corneal surgery. He has been performing LASIK and several other state-of-the-art procedures on the eyes for 20 years from his Staten Island practice, Island Eye Surgery Specialists. Dr. Nejat has enjoyed a 100 percent success rate in 20 years of performing the LASIK procedure.

