

LASIK (Laser-Assisted Intrastromal Keratomileusis)

Questions and Answers

1. What is LASIK?

LASIK is a surgical procedure intended to reduce a person's dependency on glasses or contact lenses. LASIK stands for Laser-Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis and is a procedure that permanently changes the shape of the cornea, the clear covering of the front of the eye, using an excimer laser. A special instrument, called a microkeratome, is used to create a flap in the cornea. A hinge is left at one end of this flap. The flap is folded back revealing the stroma, the middle section of the cornea. An excimer laser is used to precisely sculpt the underlying corneal tissue based on the pre-operative measurements. Once the cornea has been reshaped, the flap is replaced into its original position. There is no need to stitch the flap as it adheres to the underlying cornea on its own.

2. My glasses are thick. Can LASIK work for me?

Nearsighted, farsighted, and astigmatic patients who are 18 years of age or older, have healthy eyes that are free from retinal problems, corneal scars, and any eye disease are potential candidates for LASIK. Additionally, the best candidates are people with a lifestyle or occupation in which they are dissatisfied with their contact lenses or glasses. By having an evaluation, examination, and consultation, we will be able to determine if you are a good LASIK candidate.

3. How old do I have to be?

You must be 18 years of age or older with a stable eyeglass prescription for at least one year. You must discontinue contact lens wear for at least one week or more, depending on our evaluation.

4. How long has LASIK been around?

Laser-based refractive surgery has been performed since the early 1990's. LASIK was FDA-approved in 1995. Koffler Vision Group first performed LASIK in 1996. Our long term results have been excellent, showing effectiveness even 10 years after surgery.

5. What are the limits of LASIK?

In general, LASIK can correct myopia (near-sightedness), hyperopia (far-sightedness), and astigmatism. The FDA approved treatment ranges are +6.00 to -10.00 diopters with up to 6.00 diopters of astigmatism.

6. How long do I have to be off of work? And how long does it take?

It depends on your occupation. Certain jobs that require intense clarity of vision (dentistry and surgery, for example) may be difficult to perform for several days. Most patients can return to work the next day, assuming their vision is adequate for their job. However, some people may feel fatigued for a day or so following surgery.

You can resume most normal activities within a few days after surgery. However, for about two weeks you will need to avoid activities that would cause perspiration to run into the eyes. You should wear safety glasses while playing contact sports whether or not you have had surgery. But if you do not routinely wear safety glasses, we may recommend wearing them for at least one month after LASIK. You will also need to avoid such activities as contact sports and swimming for several weeks. It is important to talk specifically with us about limitations on activities after LASIK.

The day of surgery lasts about 2-3 hours. The surgery itself is about 15 minutes per eye. In addition, we may need to perform more measurements, alignment pictures and dilate your pupil.

7. How long until I can see?

Most patients experience very rapid visual recovery, typically by the next morning. However, there can be mild fluctuations for the first few months. You may also initially experience mild glare or halos that subside after the first few weeks.

8. Is it painful?

Patients are given a topical anesthetic (eye drops) to numb the eye, so they experience no pain during the procedure. During the procedure when the surgeon applies the vacuum ring, the patient experiences a sensation of pressure just before his or her vision fades for a few seconds. The microkeratome, the instrument the surgeon uses to create the flap, and the laser do not cause any pain or discomfort. For several hours after the procedure, many patients describe a mild burning sensation, such as after opening the eyes while swimming in chlorinated water. Therefore, taking a nap for the first 2 to 3 hours after LASIK is encouraged. After the first few hours, this uncomfortable feeling usually subsides.

9. I can't wear contact lenses. Can I still have LASIK?

There is a good chance that you may still qualify for LASIK. This will be determined after a complete eye examination. Patients intolerant of contact lenses tend to be amongst the happiest after refractive surgery.

10. Will I need to wear reading glasses afterward?

Most patients who have LASIK do not need to wear glasses for their daily activities. However, patients may need to wear reading glasses if they are over the age of 40. This is caused by the normal aging of the eye known as presbyopia. This condition occurs with or without LASIK. Some patients may need a minimal prescription for some activities. Those patients who currently have bifocals will still need reading glasses after the surgery unless they opt for a treatment plan

called monovision, wherein one eye is corrected for distance and the other for near vision. You can learn more about monovision during your eye exam.

11. How do you choose your surgeon? How experienced is your surgeon?

LASIK is a corneal surgery. While all ophthalmologists are trained in eye surgery, only cornea specialists are trained in the medical and surgical treatment of the cornea. A cornea specialist undergoes additional years of training beyond what is required for a general ophthalmologist. Therefore, we strongly feel that it should be performed by a fellowship-trained corneal surgeon. If you were to have any underlying corneal pathology or develop any problems post-operatively, a cornea specialist would be better able to recognize the condition and treat you. It is important to select an ophthalmology office where the staff is qualified and capable in caring for patients with their refractive surgical needs.

Drs. Koffler and Reddy are both cornea specialists. Dr. Koffler completed a cornea fellowship at Georgetown University in 1979. He has been performing refractive surgery since the mid-1980's, transitioning to laser-based techniques in the mid-1990's. He has presented papers on astigmatism treatment at national and international meetings. Dr. Koffler has performed over 10,000 refractive procedures in his career. Dr. Reddy completed his residency at Louisiana State University where much of the original research on LASIK was performed. He completed a cornea fellowship at the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary in 2006.

You will be examined by **your surgeon** at every visit.

12. If I have LASIK and my vision changes later in life, can I be retreated?

Depending on the cause, retreatment may be a viable solution to vision changes later in life, if they occur. We would need to see you to determine the cause of the change and to determine what would be the next appropriate option.

13. What if I am not a LASIK candidate? Are there other options?

LASIK is only one type of refractive surgery available to patients. Although it is the most common, there are other alternatives. Advanced Surface Ablation (ASA) is a variation of LASIK that can be performed in people with dry eyes, thin corneas or other medical issues. The implantable contact lens (Visian ICL) is available for those people who fall outside the range of treatment or who are hesitant about the permanent nature of LASIK. Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE) can be performed for high hyperopia or other conditions.