

Health Awareness

What To Consider If You're Considering LASIK

(NAPSA)—For more than a decade, LASIK—one of the most studied medical procedures—has been considered a safe and effective vision correction option for those who are nearsighted, farsighted and/or have astigmatism.

Like all medical procedures, LASIK has benefits and risks and the decision to have LASIK should include questions and research. Experts at the American Refractive Surgery Council (ARSC) recommend you follow these steps:

First, ask yourself some questions. Do glasses and/or contacts interfere with my daily life? Am I active—into sports or outdoor activities? Can a vision care procedure, such as LASIK, enhance my lifestyle?

Second, learn about what LASIK is (and what it is not). LASIK, one of many surgical vision correction options available, is an outpatient procedure that uses laser technology to reshape the cornea.

“LASIK is a great choice for those with active lifestyles where glasses and contacts interfere with their daily life, a stable vision prescription and realistic expectations about what the procedure can do,” said Eric D. Donnenfeld, M.D., F.A.C.S. and member of the American Refractive Surgery Council.

LASIK doesn't always completely eliminate the need for glasses—for example, those with age-related vision issues such as presbyopia may eventually need reading glasses, as almost everyone will at some point.

Talk to friends and family members who have had LASIK and have them tell you about their own experiences with the procedure. There are online resources where you can continue your research, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov) and the Eye Surgery Education Council (www.eyesurgeryeducation.com).

Third, make an appointment with an experienced ophthalmologist—someone who is certified with the American Board of Ophthalmology and has performed at least 200 procedures. Get referrals from friends, family or a trusted physician. Experienced surgeons often have additional certifications, may be on staff at a university medical school and participate in clinical research.



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Finally, in partnership with your surgeon, determine if you are a good candidate for LASIK. Many ophthalmologists offer preoperative exams for free. Expect the exam to take two to three hours, during which time you will have your vision, eyes and overall health evaluated. Share your full health history with your doctor. There are medical conditions, such as diabetes, that may make LASIK and other laser vision correction options a poor choice. Also, certain medications, such as corticosteroids, can affect the healing process.

“Education and counseling are among the most important things we do as surgeons. You want a doctor who's accessible and willing to not only tell you all the good things about LASIK but also if you're not a good candidate,” said Dr. Donnenfeld.

Bear in mind that an especially low price may not reflect your total costs, as some services may be extra. If you aren't certain about a price, ask for a written estimate. A checklist to help determine if you are a candidate for LASIK can be found at www.americanrefractive-surgery.org.