

The LASIK Surgical Procedure Explained

LASIK eye surgery has enjoyed a surge in popularity over the past decade. Today, it's a common practice that has brought relief to countless patients suffering from astigmatism, farsightedness, and nearsightedness. You've probably heard of LASIK, and may have considered having the procedure done. Before you make your decision, you need to fully understand the LASIK surgical procedure.

LASIK stands for "Laser Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis. This procedure uses a laser to permanently change the shape of the cornea, the clear covering of the front of the eye, relieving or even curing the pre-existing condition.

Part of the reason that LASIK eye surgery is so popular is the relative speed and ease of the procedure. The entire LASIK surgical procedure should take no more than thirty minutes to complete. To begin the LASIK procedure, you'll lie on your back on a reclining chair in the examination room. The room will also hold a large machine containing a microscope, a computer screen and the laser itself.

After you've settled in to your reclining chair, your doctor will clean the area around your eye and will administer eye drops. An instrument called a lid speculum will be used to hold your eyelids open. Once this instrument is in place, the doctor will place a special ring on your eye. Very high pressures will be applied to create suction to the cornea. Your vision will dim while the suction ring is on, and you may feel pressure and a little discomfort during this part of LASIK eye surgery procedure.

The suction ring holds a cutting instrument called a microkeratome. Your doctor will use this instrument to gently cut a flap in your cornea. The suction ring and microkeratome are then removed. During this entire process you'll be able to see, but will experience fluctuating degrees of blurred vision. Next, the doctor will lift the flap and fold it back to dry the exposed tissue.

The next step of the procedure will bring the laser into play. A light is positioned over your eye, and your doctor will ask you to stare directly at this light. This is not the laser used to remove tissue from the cornea, but is a light used to help you keep your eye fixed on one spot once the laser comes on. If you're not able to stare at a fixed object for at least 60 seconds, then you may not be a good candidate for this surgery. Once your eye is in the correct position, your doctor will start the laser and begin removing corneal tissue. At this point in the LASIK surgical procedure, some people have reported smelling an odor similar to burning hair.

While your doctor has control over the laser, a computer controls the amount of laser energy delivered to your eye. These settings were determined by your own personal data, which was taken at your initial evaluation and entered into the computer before your surgery began. Based on your data, the computerized laser vaporizes the predetermined amount of tissue. When the pulses of laser energy have finished vaporizing the corneal tissue, the flap is put back into position. As the final step, a shield is placed in position over your eye, providing necessary protection for the surgical area.

It is truly amazing that your poor eyesight can be forever corrected in just 30 minutes. That's why the LASIK surgical procedure is so popular today.