

LASIK FAQ

Prepared by Mulqueeny Eye Centers: mulqueenyeyecenters.com

Is LASIK surgery safe?

Next to cataract surgery, LASIK surgery is fast becoming the most performed eye procedure in the world and today's LASIK procedure is safe and extremely precise.

Though there are possible risks with any surgical procedure, serious complications with laser vision correction are extremely rare. The chance of having a vision-reducing complication from LASIK has been documented in clinical studies to be less than one percent.

Many of the risks and complications associated with LASIK can be reduced or eliminated through careful patient selection and thorough pre-operative testing using the latest diagnostic technology. After your thorough examination, you will be given additional information about the procedure, and given time to have all of your questions answered.

What are the alternatives to LASIK vision correction?

Although LASIK and Custom LASIK is the procedure of choice for many people who are nearsighted, farsighted and have astigmatism, LASIK is not a one-size-fits-all solution. At Mulqueeny Eye Centers, our surgeons are cornea trained specialists and are at the forefront of vision correction procedures and technology. Because of our surgical expertise, we are able to offer other options that LASIK-only centers can't.

Other options offered at our center include:

- PRK/ASA (Flapless LASIK) – Much like the LASIK procedure, ASA uses laser technology to treat nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism; however, this method does not create a corneal flap, reducing the risk of flap complications.
- Visian ICL™ – Used to treat moderate to severe myopia, this implantable lens acts like a contact lens, but it is implanted in your eye via a microscopic incision. It stays in place without affecting any of your eyes' structures and requires no maintenance.
- NearVision CK® – This non-laser assisted procedure uses radio waves to reshape the cornea and treats the loss of near vision resulting from presbyopia.
- Clear Lens Exchange – CLE or refractive lens exchange refers to a procedure where the natural lens of the eye is replaced with an intraocular lens, (IOL). The IOL power may be set for distance correction only (monofocal lens), or a patient may choose a multifocal or accommodating lens implant that provides correction for good near vision as well as distance.

People have diverse visual needs, and while LASIK vision correction may be the most well-known refractive surgery procedure, it is not the only one. At Mulqueeny Eye Centers, we offer several methods of obtaining good vision.

Can I undergo refractive surgery while I am pregnant, nursing, or trying to conceive? How long after I deliver should I wait before I undergo my procedure?

There are two concerns related to undergoing refractive surgery when a woman is pregnant or nursing:

- 1) There are hormonal changes during this time that could affect the measurements of myopia, hyperopia, or astigmatism
- 2) Medications (sedation, pain medication, even eye drops) can be transmitted to the fetus through the mother's bloodstream, or to the baby through breast milk.

For these reasons, those who are pregnant, nursing, or trying to conceive should wait to undergo refractive surgery until after pregnancy and nursing are complete. We typically recommend 6 weeks and two full menstrual periods after delivery and nursing.

Will I be hospitalized for LASIK?

Our LASIK procedure is performed on an outpatient basis at our own surgical center located at our facility in St. Louis, Missouri. This arrangement allows our LASIK surgeons to provide each patient the best care at a fee that is less expensive than a hospital. Additionally, our climate-controlled surgical suite is state of the art, designed for temperature control to ensure precise and predictable results.

How long does the LASIK vision correction procedure take? How long can I expect to be at the center on my surgery day?

Laser vision correction is so quick and recovery so easy, you will wonder why you waited so long to get it! The procedure itself takes only 10 minutes per eye. After an initial period of blurry vision, most patients notice a swift and significant improvement in their vision, and you will wake up the next day seeing your world with newfound clarity and sharpness. In most cases, patients can resume normal activities and return to work the very next day after surgery.

Please plan to be at our facility for two to three hours on the day of your procedure. Preoperative paperwork, discussions, and giving medication and eye drops enough time to work requires some time prior to the surgery. In addition, we wait a minimum of 30 minutes after your LASIK vision correction procedure to check your eyes one more time before you are released to go home.

What should I expect on my day of surgery? What is recovery like?

On the day of your procedure, we will ask you to arrive at our facility approximately one hour prior to your procedure. At this time, you will be dilated and final measurements will be taken for your procedure and you will have an opportunity to meet with your surgeon, who will answer any final questions you may have. You may request a mild sedative to help you relax once you have spoken to the doctor. Once you are in the laser suite, your eyes will be prepared for your procedure. The area around your eyes will be cleaned and a sterile drape may be applied around your eye. Anesthetic eye drops will be used to numb your eyes during the procedure and a lid holder will be placed between your eyelids to keep you from blinking during the procedure.

Next, an instrument called a microkeratome will create a hinged flap of thin corneal tissue, and your doctor will gently fold the flap out of the way. During this process, you may feel a little pressure, but no pain. You will then be asked to look directly at a target light while the laser reshapes your cornea. The laser will be programmed with the information gathered in your pre-operative exam. The laser treatment will be completed in less than a minute or two, depending on the amount of correction needed. To finish the procedure, the protective layer will be folded back into place where it will bond without the need for stitches.

How soon will I be able to return to my normal activities following LASIK vision correction surgery?

Depending on your occupation, patients are usually able to return to work the day after surgery. As your eyes continue to heal, it is helpful to follow these guidelines:

- Avoid dirty, dusty, or smoky environments, as well as swimming pools, hot tubs, and makeup, for one week following surgery.
- In the first few months after surgery, wear protective eyewear in any situation where your eye area may sustain a blow.
- There are no restrictions on bending or lifting after refractive surgery, though we do ask that you refrain from exercise the week after your procedure.
- When taking showers and washing your hair, take care to avoid getting soap or water in your eyes.

You will learn much more about what to expect post-operatively at your consultation with a member of our surgical team.

Can I fly after undergoing LASIK surgery? What about scuba diving?

After LASIK, you may fly at any time, though you may find that you will need to use your moisture eye drops due to the dryness during the flight.

We would recommend waiting at least one month after your surgery for scuba diving. While the pressure changes will not pose a threat, the exposure to the water and possible rubbing or bumping the eye with the mask is not recommended for recent refractive surgery patients. It is best to check with Dr. Mulqueeny to determine the appropriate amount of time to wait in your situation.

Will LASIK surgery interfere with my vacation, hobbies or work duties?

When planning your refractive surgery, it is helpful to allow more than enough time between the procedure and an important work duty, vacation, etc. Though in most cases patients can return to their active lives with minimal interruption, it is possible that LASIK surgery may require follow-up treatment, or that your visual acuity will take a bit of time to return. We schedule our procedures on a Thursday or Friday afternoon so patients can have a relaxing couple of days before they return to their commitments.

Will I need follow-up care after undergoing LASIK vision correction?

Yes. We typically see patients at the following intervals: one day, one week, one month, three months and six months postoperatively. Though we don't usually need to see patients past six months, your post-operative care is included in your fee for a period of one year. After one year, you may return to your regular eye care provider for annual eye health examinations, or we will be happy to continue your care on an on-going basis. We are providers for most vision and medical plans and will be happy to check on your benefits for you.

I already have a regular eye doctor. Can he be involved in my care before and after my procedure?

Absolutely! Because some of our patients come to us for LASIK after being referred by their eye doctors, or travel to our St. Louis center from other areas, they desire to rely on their own eye doctor for follow-up care. This rarely poses a problem, and we are happy to make it possible for you to receive coordinated care from your eye doctor.

However, you should be aware that there is a small chance you will need to follow up on refractive surgery by returning to our St. Louis office for an enhancement procedure, management of complications, or other necessary care.

What outcome can I expect after LASIK vision correction?

At Mulqueeny Eye Centers, we aim for stunning, life-changing visual outcomes. It is common for patients to enjoy corrected vision of 20/20 or better following LASIK. In fact, most of patients achieve "driving vision" by the very next day.

The outcome you can expect depends on a multitude of factors — primarily the extent of your pre-surgery refractive error. Though a "perfect" result does not always occur, you can expect a dramatic outcome that gives you increased freedom from glasses or contacts. We practice careful patient selection, have a skilled surgical

team, offer cutting-edge custom LASIK technology, and practice personalized and comprehensive pre- and post-operative care. All of these factors contribute to excellent LASIK outcomes and highly satisfied patients.

At your consultation, we will carefully examine your eyes, advise you on which vision correction procedure is best for you, and give you an idea of the outcome you can expect to achieve.

Following LASIK, how long will my new vision last? Will I ever have to wear contacts or glasses again?

Though regression of vision following LASIK is possible, it is not common. For the most part, LASIK is a permanent, long-term solution to nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism.

However, LASIK cannot prevent age-related visual changes. As we get older, we notice changes in our vision. This is commonly caused by presbyopia, a condition where the eyes' lens loses elasticity and the ability to focus on objects just a few inches or feet away. Though it is likely that you will eventually need to wear reading glasses to compensate for presbyopia, you can count on LASIK to reduce your daily dependence on glasses and contacts.

If I don't achieve the results I want with my LASIK procedure, can I have an enhancement?

Though regression of vision following LASIK is possible, it is not common. For the most part, LASIK is a permanent, long-term solution to nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism.

At Mulqueeny Eye Centers, most of our patients experience a significant visual improvement, love the outcome of the surgery, and achieve excellent vision without glasses.

However, in some cases, an over or under response to the procedure may occur due to individual healing tendencies and you may opt to have your vision refined by an enhancement procedure. Some patients choose to stand by the original result and avoid additional procedures, while others opt to go ahead with an enhancement. Our enhancement rate is very low; however, if a retreatment is necessary, the cost will be included in your LASIK fee for one year.

What are the risks and side effects of LASIK surgery?

LASIK laser vision correction is a safe, highly successful procedure. Though there are possible risks with any surgical procedure, serious complications with laser vision correction are extremely rare. The chance of having a vision-reducing complication from LASIK has been documented in clinical studies to be less than one percent. Many of the risks and complications associated with this procedure can be reduced or eliminated through careful patient selection and thorough pre-operative testing.

Besides cost, the second most asked question involves difficulty with night time vision. After laser vision correction, you may experience some visual side effects. These are usually mild and most often diminish over a few days to a few weeks, such as feelings of dryness and mild glare and halo, particularly at night.

Night time side-effects may include halos, starbursts, and glare around lights and blurry vision. Some of these can be caused by over or under response to your treatment or residual astigmatism. These effects usually diminish as the eye heals in the first three months and occasionally an additional touch-up or enhancement procedure will be recommended.

Another possible cause of night time side-effects is pupil size. At night, the pupil gets larger to let in more light. If the pupil size expands beyond the area treated with the laser, you may experience glare and halo. In these cases, we will advise you prior to your procedure if you fall in this category, or we may recommend a different vision correction procedure for you. However, our advanced laser technology with the LADARVision® laser system has expanded treatment zones and many patients who were previously not good LASIK candidates due to large pupil size are now able to have LASIK treatments with exceptional results.

If after a thorough examination we decide you are a good candidate for laser vision correction, you will be given additional information about the procedure that will allow you to make an informed decision about whether to proceed.

Does LASIK vision correction cause dry eyes?

Following a LASIK procedure, every patient will experience dry eye symptoms to some extent. This is because the creation of the LASIK flap disrupts the normal tear film. Though dry eye after LASIK is usually temporary, you can expect that it will clear up within 8 to 12 weeks except in rare cases, where it may take longer. Because we know that dry eye is a common condition following LASIK, we will prescribe a special eye drop called Restasis® that you will use prior to your procedure and will continue to use for the first month following your procedure. Restasis® is a prescription eye drop that actually helps your eye to produce more tears to help alleviate dry eye issues that may accompany LASIK. If we feel you need additional support, we may also prescribe HydroEye® - an Omega-3 dietary supplement to aid in the treatment of dry eye.

An important part of your comprehensive evaluation prior to LASIK is a dry eye evaluation. Patients with pre-existing dry eye may not be well-suited for LASIK, but may be better candidates for a surface laser treatment such as ASA. Tests can often diagnose dry eye but it is still somewhat difficult to predict who will experience significant dryness following LASIK. A thorough evaluation of your current medications, medical history and work environment will all be taken into account.

There is so much advertising for LASIK these days, and doctors vary so much in their prices. How do I choose?

With all of the advertising you hear about LASIK, it is really difficult for the consumer to differentiate between LASIK providers. Many discount LASIK

providers want you to believe that LASIK should be purchased like a commodity and that surgeon experience, lasers, diagnostic technology and follow-up care does not matter. Actually, this couldn't be more untrue! Your decision to have LASIK will affect your vision for the rest of your life, so we encourage you to investigate other LASIK centers and compare. We feel confident that once you visit our center, you'll see the difference!

Our mission at Mulqueeny Eye Centers is to offer the premium LASIK experience. We offer a talented team of specialists from our cornea-trained surgeons to our knowledgeable, friendly staff. Additionally, we treat our patients as family and friends and believe in enhancing our patients' lives through quality, personalized care.

How can I learn more about refractive procedures or get started on LASIK vision correction?

Our friendly and knowledgeable patient counselors are always at your service to answer your questions. At Mulqueeny Eye Centers, we have found that patients who are highly educated going into surgery are the most satisfied after undergoing LASIK vision correction or another type of refractive surgery. To learn more about any of the procedures offered at our St. Louis surgical center or to schedule your free consultation, visit the "contact us" page on our website – www.mulqueenyeyecenters.com.