



LASIK

(Laser Assisted In-Situ Keratomileusis)

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Background

Together with the eye's lens, the cornea plays a very important role in focusing the images we see on the eye's retina.

A smooth, clear and healthy cornea, of which the curvature is correctly shaped, is therefore of critical importance for good vision.

What is LASIK?

LASIK was first introduced during the mid 1990s. The process uses a highly-accurate laser to permanently reshape the curvature of a healthy cornea so that normal vision may be restored.

To qualify for LASIK, among other criteria, a cornea must be healthy and at least 470 microns (0.47mm) thick.

Advantages and disadvantages

- LASIK is a highly successful treatment that can restore good vision.
- The treatment is performed under local anaesthetic.
- The treatment causes very little discomfort, visual recovery is quick and both eyes may be treated in one session.
- Within two to three days most patients continue with their normal daily activities.
- Initially some patients may see halos around bright lights in poor light (i.e. street lamps at night). This clears over time.
- Many patients experience a feeling of dryness in their eyes after the procedure. This may last from nine months to a year after the treatment. These symptoms can be treated with artificial tears that are freely available from the chemist.

- Should the initial refractive error be severe, a second procedure may be done three to six months after the first one. The re-treatment rate depends on the initial refractive error, and for patients with shortsightedness is:

- < 3 diopters 5%
- 3 to 6 diopters 10%
- > 6 diopters 15%

For patients with astigmatism more than 2.5 diopters, the re-treatment rate may be as high as 50% three months after the first treatment. Our experience shows that the majority of those needing a second treatment, do not require any further treatments thereafter.

- From the age of 40, the natural lens in the eye loses its ability to adjust its focus. So although a LASIK treatment will correct distance vision, reading glasses may be required after the middle 40s due to the inability of the eye to focus near. Therefore, **shortsighted patients will, like any normal seeing individual**, lose their near vision later on, but will be able to use reading glasses similar to normal seeing individuals.

Before and during the procedure

- You receive a mild sedative prior to the procedure to put you at ease. The eye is fully anaesthetized by means of drops which are placed into the eye.
- Throughout the procedure you will be able to co-operate. The doctor will keep you informed on what you will perceive, without telling you about the details of the procedure, to enable you to co-operate.

- A precision hinged flap of 120 microns (0.12 mm) thick is made with a special instrument on the front surface of the cornea. This is lifted and then folded to one side to expose the surface to be reshaped with a computer-controlled laser.
- While treatment is under way, you will be required to look at a green fixation light within a circle of white LEDs. However, should your eye accidentally move, the laser's advanced automatic eye-tracking mechanism will compensate for the eye's movement.
- After the laser treatment, the flap is replaced into its original position where it re-attaches itself to the cornea over time.
- The actual laser treatment lasts between 15 and 45 seconds per eye (the treatment time depends on the extent of the correction). If both eyes are treated, the entire session will last approximately 40 minutes.

After the treatment

- Drops are placed into each eye and a hard shield is taped over each eye to protect it against accidental contact. As far as possible and practical, you need to keep the eyes shut during those first hours.
- The first night you may want to use a sleeping aid to relax and get a good night's sleep. You may also use the pain tablets provided, although this is rarely necessary.
- When you visit the clinic the next day for your first follow-up examination, the hard eye shields will be removed by our staff.
- Irrespective of the initial refractive error, patients are able to see the 20/40 line or

better at day one, which is the standard for driving a vehicle in South Africa.

Please observe the following pointers:

- Never rub your eyes or apply direct pressure to them!
- Blink as usual and do not close the eye lids forcefully.
- Sleep with the hard shields on your eyes for the first week after the procedure. Tape these in position with the Transpore tape in your after-care kit. **Do not use rubber bands**, as they may cause the shields to move.
- Immediately after the treatment, your eyes may be watery, scratchy and you may briefly experience a stinging sensation, hence the sleeping aid to allow you to sleep for the first couple of hours after the treatment.
- Should you experience irritation after your first visit, use the artificial tears which are prescribed. These symptoms will clear within a day or two.
- If you experience your vision to become 'misty' in the first 5 days after the procedure, you should contact us.
- It is normal for your vision to fluctuate during the first three months. These fluctuations tend to become less obvious as time passes. After three months, your vision will be stable.
- If required, clean the eyelid very gently from the top to the bottom with a moist cotton wool pad. The reason for this is simply that the fixed part of the flap is at the top, while the free end is at the bottom. It is important to stroke gently over the eye from the fixed to the loose end.

After the first week

Your vision will be tested and the eyes examined. After your visit a week after the procedure, you will again be able to ...

- Sleep without the eye shields.
- Play sport, except for contact sports, which you may resume after six months.
- Drive if your vision is 20/40 or better.

• Wear make-up.

However, still do not ...

- Rub your eyes.
- Expose your eyes to pool-, shampoo- or soapy water for the first six weeks.

To avoid potential complications, it is important to adhere strictly to the prescribed medication and routines.

The medication will be adapted during your visit one week after the procedure to ensure a long-term result.

For further information, as well as a list of frequently-asked questions about LASIK and the answers thereto, please visit our website at www.lasik.co.za.