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LASIK Postop Instructions

When you first open your eyes after LASIK surgery, your vision will be blurred. You may feel as though you're looking through water or a layer of Vaseline. This is normal and will go away within 6-12 hours. Hour by hour, your vision will improve. By the next morning, your vision may still not be crystal clear, but there will certainly be a dramatic improvement. Most patients are surprised by how well they can see within a few hours of surgery.

Your vision will continue to improve during the first week, although you may have moments of seeing very well and moments of blurred vision. This is most commonly due to dryness on the surface of the eye or mild swelling of the cornea, which are both a normal part of the healing process. Technically, your vision doesn't stabilize until three to six months after surgery. During that time, your vision will probably become clearer and crisper, and your night vision may even improve. A small number of patients experience minor glare or halos post-surgery when they are around lights, but these issues also resolve during the first few months after LASIK.

Dryness is often a temporary problem after LASIK surgery. This is because the flap temporarily causes changes in the cornea's sensation, which reduces tear production for a short period of time. These changes go back to normal within a few months after surgery, restoring normal sensation to the eyes and normal tear production. Most patients only feel the need to use artificial tears a few times a day during the first week. If your eyes are extremely dry, however, artificial tears can be used up to every hour, if necessary, to relieve the condition. If the dry eye condition persists, of course, it can be treated with punctal plugs or a prescription for Restasis. IntraLase® causes much fewer changes in the cornea's sensation and ability to produce tears, so this dry eye problem has been reduced significantly in recent years.

Your eyes may also be red for a week or two following surgery. This is called a subconjunctival hemorrhage and is nothing more than a slight and normal bruising process. You need do nothing but ignore the redness, which will heal on its own.

Going Home After Surgery

When your surgeon is satisfied with the position and appearance of your flaps, you are free to go home. However, you will be given goggles to wear until the next morning. This includes sleeping in the goggles to prevent you from unconsciously rubbing your eyes during the first night. The goggles aren't as uncomfortable as they sound, however. We have found that many patients are very impressed by how well they can see the evening after surgery, even through the goggles. Besides the goggles, you will be given sunglasses to wear outdoors, as you may experience temporary light sensitivity after your surgery.

The numbing drops that you were given prior to surgery will remain in effect for 15-30 minutes after surgery. When the numbing has worn off, you may experience some temporary discomfort. In our experience, about one-third of patients feel no discomfort whatsoever, while another one-third experience some mild burning, stinging, light sensitivity, and tearing. The final one-third will experience moderate to severe burning and stinging during the first three to four hours after surgery. In the worst case scenario, it feels as if Tabasco sauce is in the eyes for this short period of time. We advise our patients to keep their eyes closed during these first few hours if they are uncomfortable, preferably in a dark room while sleeping or listening to music or the television. It's also perfectly acceptable to take Advil, Tylenol, or other oral pain medications. For virtually all patients, however, we have found that the discomfort is short-lived and well-tolerated. You will be instructed to put steroid drops (prednisone) in your eyes 2 to 3 times on the day of surgery, depending on the time of day the surgery was performed. This decreases the chance of inflammation after surgery. The artificial tears and antibiotic drops are not necessary until the day after surgery. Just use the steroid (prednisone) drops the day of surgery.

Prednisone





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It's important when putting drops in your eye that you don't touch or rub the eye because this could dislodge the flap, particularly during this first week after surgery. Follow the steps below to safely put drops in your eyes:

1. Lift your chin up.
2. Look up with your eyes toward the ceiling.
3. Pull your lower eyelid down with your index finger without touching your eye. Touch only the bony socket *around* the eye.
4. Without touching the bottle to your eye or even bringing it too close to the eye, place a drop in the lower cul de sac area of the eye. When you let go of your lower eyelid with your finger, the drop will be distributed evenly all along the surface of the eye.

The Day After Surgery

The morning after your surgery, you can remove the goggles, and you needn't wear them anymore. Some patients feel more comfortable sleeping in the goggles, however, if they're concerned they might be "rough" on their eyes while they sleep. No matter what, don't rub your eyes or wear eye makeup for the first week. The makeup itself isn't so much a problem, but the application and removal of makeup can cause problems with the flaps. Try to avoid getting water in your eyes, even when you shower, and don't swim for the first week after surgery.

Antibiotic



You will continue with the steroid (prednisone) drops four times per day, and you will also start using an antibiotic drop four times per day in order to prevent infection. You will administer both of these eye drops for the first week after your surgery, and you don't have to use the drops in any particular order. It is best to wait 5 minutes between using the steroid and the antibiotic in order to make sure that the first medication has been absorbed. After 1 week, medication eye drops are no longer needed. Depending on how dry the eyes are, artificial tears will be given as directed.

You can resume other normal activities the morning after surgery such as reading, watching television, working on the computer, and going to work, as long as you feel comfortable. If your work requires good depth perception, however, you may want to give yourself a few days to adjust to your new vision.

You can even exercise, as perspiration doesn't cause any problems. Of course, be careful to avoid any trauma to the eye. If you participate in contact sports—such as tennis or racquetball—it's best to avoid these for at least the first week after surgery. After that time, the flap will be well-healed. Of course, it's best to wear protective eye gear when engaging in any activities that could result in an object hitting your eyes, whether or not you have had surgery.

You will see your surgeon the day after surgery, and your vision will be checked to make sure the results are as expected. A topography will also be conducted to monitor your results. The surgeon will double-check for inflammation, dryness, and any appearance of infection. The vast majority of patients are fine, but these steps are a precaution to make absolutely sure that your surgery went well.

Postoperative Visits

Patients are also seen a week after surgery, six weeks after surgery, three months after, and then, for normal annual examinations. If vision is not adequate after three months, an enhancement can be considered at that time. This is only needed in a small minority of patients.

Most all patients who experience LASIK are surprised by the speed of the healing process and their ability to go back to their lives virtually immediately after surgery. This is why you hear the phrase, "the miracle of LASIK."