Surgery Overview

Laser in-situ keratomileusis (LASIK) is the preferred procedure for correcting farsightedness (hyperopia). It changes the shape of the eye. In LASIK, a thin flap is made on the cornea using a blade or laser. The flap is lifted, and a laser is applied to the central corneal tissue. The laser makes contact with the cornea in a circular pattern around the central optical zone. This changes the profile of the cornea, making it steeper. The laser removes tissue from the cornea very precisely without damaging nearby tissues. The flap is then replaced, allowing for rapid healing.

LASIK is performed in a surgeon’s office or same-day surgery center. It does not require a hospital stay.

This procedure may not be available in all areas, but it is done in most large cities.

What To Expect After Surgery

Most people have little or no pain after LASIK surgery. And most people who have LASIK see quite well the next day.

Your doctor will want you to come in for an exam the day after the surgery and for regular follow-up exams for about 6 months.

After LASIK surgery to correct farsightedness:

- You will feel irritation and scratchiness in the eye the day of surgery. And a lot of tears may come out of your eye.
- You may need to wear an eye shield for a few days after surgery.
• Your vision may be hazy or blurry for a few days or a week after surgery. Do not drive until your vision has cleared.
• Your doctor may prescribe eyedrops to reduce inflammation and the risk of infection. You may need to use them for several months after surgery.
• You should avoid vigorous sports, eye makeup, and any activities during which water may get in your eye. The surgeon may advise you to shower before the surgery, then avoid showering for a day or two after to avoid getting water in your eye.
• Dry-eye symptoms are common but usually temporary.

Why It Is Done

LASIK surgery may be used to correct mild to moderate farsightedness. Treating severe farsightedness is not as effective as treating mild or moderate farsightedness.

LASIK is an elective, cosmetic procedure, done to correct farsightedness in otherwise healthy eyes.

The procedure may not be done for people who:

• Have not had stable vision for at least 1 year.
• Are under age 18.
• Are pregnant, because pregnancy may cause changes in the cornea.
• Have a disease or abnormality of the cornea, such as keratoconus or corneal edema, or another eye disease, such as advanced or uncontrolled glaucoma or cataracts.
• Have poorly controlled diabetes or complications of diabetes that affect vision.
• Have significant risk of injuring their cornea from a job or hobby.

How Well It Works

LASIK is a relatively new surgery. (It was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2000.) Little is known about the long-term outcomes. Doctors continue to improve the technique and to study the long-term results.

Over the short term, LASIK has been shown to be effective and consistent in reducing mild to moderate farsightedness.

LASIK is better at treating lower levels of farsightedness than higher levels.
Risks

The risk of complications from LASIK surgery is low, and it decreases even further with a more experienced surgeon. Look for a corneal specialist or surgeon who does this surgery frequently.

Complications and side effects from LASIK may include:

- Night vision problems, such as halos (often described as a shimmering circular zone around light sources such as headlights or streetlights).
- Glare, or increased sensitivity to bright light.
- Double vision (diplopia), usually in one eye.
- New astigmatism caused by wrinkling in the corneal flap or other flap complications.
- New or worse dry-eye symptoms.
- Clouded vision (clouding of the cornea as a result of healing). This is sometimes also referred to as corneal haze. This is less common with LASIK than it is with the PRK procedure and tends to go away quickly.

Serious vision-threatening complications are rare but may include:

- Infection of the cornea (keratitis).
- Elevated pressure inside the eye (intraocular pressure) leading to glaucoma.

Because LASIK is a relatively new procedure, long-term risks are not yet known.

What To Think About

If you are thinking about having surgery to improve farsightedness, discuss the different options (LASIK, PRK, LASEK, intraocular lens implants, CK, and LTK) with your doctor.

LASIK is the refractive surgery of choice for most people.

Be sure to keep a record of your original eye measurements from this procedure (your doctor can give them to you), in case you need cataract surgery in the future. This record can help your doctor calculate the power of future post-cataract implants.

LASIK is a cosmetic procedure. The cost of refractive surgery varies. Most insurance companies do not cover the cost of refractive surgery.

Complete the surgery information form (PDF) to help you prepare for this surgery.

Related Information

- Farsightedness (Hyperopia)
References

Citations

Credits

By Healthwise Staff
Primary Medical Reviewer  Adam Husney, MD - Family Medicine
Specialist Medical Reviewer  Christopher J. Rudnisky, MD, MPH, FRCSC - Ophthalmology
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