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Overcoming LASIK Fear: Trust Your Doctor

July 18, 2013



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Melissa Clark, Sr., let her LASIK fear keep her from the surgery until she felt cornered by her glasses and contacts. Clark started wearing eye glasses at eight years old. At 15, the teenager upgraded to contacts. But her relationship with eye care remained one of love/hate. Clark loved to see—but she loathed the eye glasses and contacts that helped her do so.

“I was dependent on both,” she said.

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As an adult, Clark struggled with the idea of LASIK. “I confess: I was scared for a long time,” she said. “The possibility of losing what little vision I had far outweighed having corrective independence.”

For some people, LASIK remains too fearful an idea to broach with their eye doctor. There are risks, such as developing a dry eye condition or, in rare instances, having certain vision complications. Not to mention the idea of a laser beam reshaping their cornea sounds scary.

Overcoming LASIK fears

Clark eventually underwent LASIK. She talked with friends and family who had had the procedure, but ultimately it was her eye doctor who referred her to a vision center she could trust, which made the biggest difference.

“Now I'm wondering why I waited so long!” she said.

Getting care from a trusted eye doctor can make you feel more comfortable with your decision to undergo LASIK.

Eye doctors who perform LASIK are called ophthalmologists. These eye doctors have completed at least eight years of medical school and have medical degrees and licenses. Each also studies eye surgery for another one to two years and will be certified not only in using FDA-approved laser eye surgery equipment, but also in assessing someone’s candidacy for LASIK.

Your LASIK surgeon might also commit to career-long training and testing to maintain certification from the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO). Every 10 years the ABO requires doctors show proof of progress in the field. The ABO website (www.abop.org) allows you to check an ophthalmologist’s standing at no cost.

Don’t be afraid to ask your eye doctor about other qualifications, too: certifications, training, number of laser eye surgeries performed and statistics related to those eye surgery results.

Your regular eye doctor, an optometrist, can refer you to an ophthalmologist for LASIK. Often your regular eye doctor will stay active in your LASIK pre-operative care and post-operative care. Under this two-doctor supervision, millions of people have undergone laser eye surgery.

And more than 95 percent of LASIK patients feel satisfied with their results—including Melissa Clark.

“It blows my mind that this 20/20 vision is mine and won't go away with the loss of a contact lens or removal of glasses,” she said.

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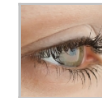
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