

Patient Guides Series

When you are considering laser eye surgery, this series of informative guides will help in making the best decision for you and your eyes. Please call us on **0845 3300010** or visit www.horizoneyecentres.com For more information or to request other Patient Guides in this series, please visit our website, click on Patient Guides on the home page

Patient Guides #2:

Which Vision Correction Procedure is Right for You?

Which is the Right Procedure for You?

How Do the Different Laser Treatments Compare?

It can be quite confusing if you are thinking about laser vision correction and want to know which procedure would be best for you. While both LASIK and LASEK can give you excellent vision in a safe and reliable way, some surgeons prefer one or the other, or may indeed only offer one type anyway! How is the prospective patient supposed to decide? What happens in practice is that patients are greatly influenced by what their particular surgeon says, and understandably so. It is always worth seeking a second opinion and comparing the findings and comments of each doctor. Any surgeon worth his or her salt shouldn't be threatened by this. Some patients feel more confident with one doctor or another, based on a personal "chemistry".

Educate yourself as you are doing through reading books like this. Attend a seminar about laser vision correction. Browse the internet where there is a wealth of information (plus some misinformation!). Ask about the experiences of those who had LASIK and those having LASEK. You might meet people who have had the original PRK procedure, and who had radial keratotomy (RK).

Patient Guides Series

Table 8.1 shows a comparison of surface laser treatment (LASEK or PRK) and LASIK. Included also is information on CK, an alternate treatment for longsightedness and the need for reading glasses.

	Surface Laser (LASEK & PRK)	LASIK	CK
What kind of treatment is it?	Excimer laser used to reshape the cornea	Excimer laser used to reshape the cornea	Non-laser steepening of the cornea. Simple and very safe
Suitable prescriptions	Short & longsight From -8 to +2.5	Short & longsight From -10 to +4	Longsight up to +3.0 People who only wear reading glasses are also suitable
Pain during treatment	None	None	None
Where is the treatment?	Just under surface	25% under surface	Around the edge of the cornea
Pain afterwards?	Usually gritty or some discomfort, 3-4 days	Gritty for a few hours only	Gritty for a day or so
Drops afterwards?	Usually 1-3 weeks	1 week	3 days
Effective vision after...	3-5 days	24 hours	1-7 days
Final vision after	3 weeks to several months, depending on prescription	4-12 weeks	2-12 weeks
Back to work...	3-5 days	1-2 days	1-2 days
Risk of complications	Low	Low	Very low
Higher levels of longsight suitable?	No	Sometimes	No
May be suitable for reading vision?	Not usually	Not usually	Yes
Age suitable	Over 18	Over 18	Over 40

Table 8.1

LASIK and LASEK are both very effective procedures, and can be used to treat myopia, hyperopia and astigmatism (nearsight, farsight and astigmatism). In terms of final vision, both procedures can produce excellent results for mild or moderate myopia, or mild hyperopia. (We now use CK for the latter, due to a superb safety profile.) For higher degrees of refractive error, I generally perform LASIK, although there is now some evidence that LASEK may also be

Patient Guides Series

suitable. When there is a choice, it will depend more on the patients needed recovery time, and feeling about having a corneal flap.

We have learned that surface ablation in the form of LASEK is an excellent technique, and the improvements from LASIK were partly to do with the newer lasers and ablation patterns, rather than just with the creation of the flap. The rebirth of surface ablation may have been helped by the adoption of a new name (LASEK). However, its similarity to the word LASIK has added a new layer of confusion for some people, who simply want to know what procedure is state-of-the-art.

We find much of our time is spent during consultations discussing the evolution of PRK into LASEK, and how it compares with LASIK. This is time well spent, because it allows us to explore the risks associated with each procedure in detail. We find patients prefer to understand what is going on in vision correction in some depth. We believe in patients being actively involved in their healthcare choices to be a very positive movement. Whatever the patient wants to know about laser vision correction gets discussed fully.

If you choose LASIK (when you have the choice), it will usually be for one of the following reasons:

- ✓ faster visual recovery (most patients are at the legal driving standard the next morning, and many are at or close to 20/20)
- ✓ minimal discomfort after the surgery (grittiness for about 4 hours)
- ✓ shorter period using drops post-operatively (about 1 week)
- ✓ having a higher degree of refractive error

If you choose LASEK, it will generally be for one of the following reasons:

- ✓ your corneas are thin
- ✓ you want to avoid any flap-related complications (while rare, most of LASIK's complications are related to the flap in some way)
- ✓ you do not have enough corneal tissue to treat your full prescription and allow for the thickness of the flap (if you don't cut a flap, you have perhaps another 50-60 microns available - this means another 3-5 dioptres can be treated, depending on the laser)
- ✓ the condition of your eyes means that it is better to avoid the high pressure required during the creation of a LASIK flap
- ✓ your corneas are very steep, and you want to avoid problems with preparing the flap (flaps may be too thin with steep corneas, although this is open to discussion)
- ✓ waiting a little longer for your vision to settle down is no problem
- ✓ you have heard LASEK may produce sharper vision than LASIK (also open to discussion!)
- ✓ you participate in contact sports, and want to avoid trauma to the flap
- ✓ your myopia is mild or moderate, and you can have both eyes treated at the same session with LASEK (generally not above -6 to -7 dioptres)

The best choice for you will depend upon specific factors relating to the health and shape of your eyes, your desired speed of recovery, your personal circumstances, and your assessment of the risks of each procedure compared to the benefits. Your surgeon can help guide you through the entire process.

You should note that some centres offering free consultations use opticians (optometrists) rather than ophthalmic surgeons. You no doubt will prefer the depth of knowledge that your surgeon will

Patient Guides Series

bring to the discussion. Make sure you have full access to the treating surgeon and all the time you need to talk through the necessary issues.

In the end, you will get what you pay for.

This guide is an extract from Dr. David Allamby's new book, written for anyone considering laser eye surgery, and available March 2006

Call us now on 0845 3300010 to find out more, and to book your consultation