

Laser Vision Correction

Patient information leaflet – assessment, treatment and recovery

The assessment comes first

Laser vision correction is quick, comfortable and highly predictable in a suitable eye. The most important appointment is therefore the one that decides whether your eye is suitable. Around one in five people assessed is better served by an implantable lens, or by keeping their glasses.

What is measured

- Detailed scans of the shape and thickness of your cornea
- Your prescription, measured with drops that relax focusing
- Pupil size in dim light, which predicts night vision quality
- Tear film stability – dryness is treated before surgery is planned
- A full examination of the retina

Please attend without contact lenses: soft lenses out for at least one week, rigid lenses for longer as advised. Lenses alter the shape of the cornea and make the measurements unreliable.

The two laser methods

- LASIK. A thin layer of cornea is lifted, the tissue beneath reshaped, and the layer replaced. Recovery is rapid – most people see well the following morning.
- Surface laser (PRK). The reshaping is performed on the surface without lifting a layer. Preferred for thinner corneas and contact sports. The final result is equally good, but recovery is slower and the first days are uncomfortable.

Recovery – what to expect

- After LASIK: watering, light sensitivity and burning for four to six hours. Sleep if you can. Vision is usually clear the next morning.
- After surface laser: three to five days of soreness under a protective contact lens, which is removed once the surface has healed. Vision clears over one to four weeks.
- Use the drops exactly as prescribed. Lubricating drops are used frequently for the first few months.
- No rubbing. No swimming, saunas or contact sport for one month. No eye make-up for two weeks.
- Haloes and starbursts around lights at night are common early and settle over weeks to months.

What laser does not do

Laser corrects distance vision. From the mid-forties the natural lens stiffens with age, so reading glasses will eventually be needed. The reshaping is permanent, but the eye continues to age: a cataract can still develop later in life and is treated in the usual way.

Contact the clinic urgently if you develop

- Pain that increases rather than settles
- Vision that becomes worse after having been clear
- Increasing redness with discharge
- A sudden shower of floaters, flashing lights or a shadow in your vision

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Notes for you from today's consultation