

●●● Up Close and Picture Perfect

Almost like clockwork, people turn 40 and suddenly they're squinting and playing the trombone to read anything with fine print. The term presbyopia, or farsightedness, derives from a Greek word that means "old person," but in those days people retired and bought a home in Florida at the age of 25, so their definition of age was a



bit exaggerated. Biologically, what happens, much like your husband, as the lens in the eye ages, it becomes more and more inflexible. Squinting does work, a little, because you are putting extra pressure on the eyeball to help bend your lens.

Crystal lens replacement (CLR) is a surgical procedure that replaces your natural lens with an implantable variable focus lens. Sounds scary, but this accommodating lens works in conjunction with your eye muscles to allow you to see both up close and at a distance. Currently, the operation is only approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat cataracts, but many ophthalmologists are also using it to treat presbyopia.

"Eighty to 90 percent of people will not need reading glasses after CLR," says Dr. Christopher Coad, medical director at Chelsea Eye Associates in New York City. "The rest would need only mild reading glasses for dim light or extremely up-close situations."

While off-label uses of a procedure are perfectly acceptable, Coad and other eye professionals are reluctant to use CLR on everyone.

"I'm very cautious on operating on someone who has excellent vision and is only doing it to eliminate the need for reading glasses because there is no risk-free surgery," Coad says. "My ideal patient is someone who is over 45 with other vision problems, has a certain pupil size and has no other eye pathology."