



## I Got LASIK: An Eyewitness Account

by Glenn Michael Gordon



I'm 34, and for the first time in my life, I can see things clearly. I'm not referring to some psychological breakthrough. Rather, I got the most advanced LASIK eye surgery

last month and I'm totally thrilled with the results.

Contacts used to be just fine for me. Then, about a year ago, my eyes would get red and irritated every time I wore them. My eye doctor said I had probably developed an allergy to either my contact lenses, the solution, or both. I decided to start wearing my glasses full-time, which was a clumsy alternative, since I love to go to the beach and swim. A recent trip to Hawaii, when snorkeling became a near impossibility, made me decide to finally seek an alternative.

### DO YOUR RESEARCH

My biggest concerns were safety and cost. Most medical insurance policies don't cover laser eye surgery, but I discovered that I could allot money into a flexible spending account for the coming year, which allows you to pay for the surgery with before-tax income. Since the procedure runs between \$2,000 to \$7,000 for both eyes, depending on the doctor and technology you opt for, "tax free" can mean major savings.

Surgery of any kind poses some risk, but I could feel more relaxed with a qualified and experienced doctor. After some research, I chose Joseph A. Eviatar, M.D., F.A.C.S., one of the medical directors at Chelsea Eye & Cosmetic Surgery Associates in New York City. When choosing a surgeon for this procedure, you want someone who has performed thousands of laser eye surgeries, is board certified with the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and is affiliated with a respected medical center. Dr. Eviatar fit this description.

### KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

After a thorough examination of my eyes, Dr. Eviatar discussed my options with me. I was a good candidate for LASIK since I had healthy eyes, a normal shape and thickness to my cornea, and a stable prescription. LASIK would likely correct my nearsightedness (my prescription was 20/400), as well as the astigmatism (blurred vision) I had in one eye.

Dr Eviatar also recommended two advanced technologies that he believed would give me even crisper vision. The first was WavePrint Custom LASIK, which in layman's terms meant that he would take a fingerprint-like image of my eye so he could correct any irregularities in my vision in addition to my prescription. This would allow for crisper vision with a reduced chance of night vision problems. The second was IntraLase, which allows him to perform the entire lasik procedure with a laser (no blade) and may make LASIK even safer and more precise.

LASIK eye surgery is a relatively safe procedure, but it's definitely not without some risk. (Talk to your own doctor to see if it's right for you.) Fewer than 1 percent of patients experience a serious problem such as inflammation, infection or a flap

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related problem. In very rare cases, this could cause worsening of vision. I took comfort in the fact that medical journals indicate that more than a million people worldwide have had lasik with excellent results (these include my brother, two friends, and several coworkers). Everyone I knew who had the procedure done was thrilled.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT**

I admit I was a little nervous when I arrived for the procedure. These are my eyes, after all. But the process was simpler and less scary than I anticipated.

First, in preparation for the treatment, Dr Eviatar gave me medication to help me relax. I was then seated in a reclining chair, the kind you sit in at the dentist. The doctor placed anesthetic drops in my eyes and positioned me under the laser. Then he placed a retainer on the eye he was about to treat, which holds the lids open. While it wasn't painful, it's certainly uncomfortable and strange. He and his staff were very reassuring throughout the procedure, however, and explained each step as it was happening.

Next, Dr. Eviatar told me to focus on a blinking light. He then began the laser treatment. I didn't feel anything while the invisible laser light removed microscopic amounts of tissue, less than the thickness of a human hair, from my cornea. Afterwards, antibiotic and anti-inflammatory drops were placed in my eye for protection and comfort. Amazingly, each eye took just minutes to treat.

Dr. Eviatar warned that my immediate vision might be a bit blurry, "as if you were underwater," but that my vision would improve in a couple of hours. Even so, I could tell minutes after the operation that my vision was already improved. The doctor placed a pair of protective sunglasses over my eyes and I went home, took the pills I was given, and took a long nap.

### **SEEING THE RESULTS**

For the first time in years, I awoke to clear vision. It's a great feeling. For five days, I administered antibiotic and anti-inflammatory eye drops to ensure proper healing. Although I was warned that some patients experience dry eyes and minor fluctuations in vision in the weeks after the procedure, I have not. As a precaution, Dr. Eviatar still suggests I use artificial tears found at any drugstore several times a day for the first month.

LASIK was a great decision for me. My vision is now 20/20, more than good enough to kiss my glasses good-bye. I'm not sure whether to credit the WavePrint system, the precise IntraLase technology, or both but my current vision actually seems better than it did before with glasses or contacts.

Best of all, summer is just weeks away, and I am looking forward to a beautiful day at the beach.