

Laser Eye Surgery

This material will help you understand your laser eye surgery and what you can expect.

What is laser eye surgery?

Lasers are beams of light that turn into heat when they reach the eye. This heat can be used to treat a variety of eye problems. These include the closing of leaking blood vessels commonly caused by diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. Lasers help to slow or stop the growth of abnormal blood vessels (called neovascularization) that may also result from these conditions. Eye doctors often use lasers to seal torn or detached eye tissue, especially in the retina.

Note that this heat laser is different than the laser used to improve vision (such as with LASIK eye surgery). That type of laser is more like a knife, which is used to cut or sculpt eye tissue.

What do I need to know before my laser eye surgery?

There are no special preparations for this procedure. You should eat normally and take all your regular medicines before you come in for surgery.

The procedure is performed as an outpatient surgery or in your doctor's office, so you will be able to go home the same day. Be sure to arrange for a responsible adult to come with you, stay during surgery, and take you home. Your eyes will be blurry after the surgery, so you should not drive.

What should I expect on the day of my laser eye surgery?

On the day of your procedure, you will come to the Kellogg Eye Center Retina Clinic. A technician will first take a few measurements of your eyes. Next s/he will instill eye drops to numb your eye and prepare you for the laser. Your eye doctor will bring you back to the laser room.

You will remain awake and comfortable during the procedure. Most patients describe the laser as having a mild “sting.” Once the procedure is over, most patients have no pain. It usually takes about 30 minutes to complete.

What should I expect after my surgery?

Your vision may be blurry after surgery, but should clear up by the next morning. Small spots may also appear in your vision after surgery. We recommend that you rest for the remainder of the day following surgery, but you should be able to resume your normal activities by the next day depending on the nature of your condition.

To ensure the best recovery, carefully follow any instructions your doctor gives you and keep all of your follow up appointments.

Are there complications related to laser eye surgery?

With any surgery, there is a chance of a complication. Your doctor will discuss many of these with you when s/he talks with you about consenting to surgery. You should call your eye doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms (or any others that worry you):

- Increased pain not helped by Tylenol® (Acetaminophen)
- Change in vision
- Any redness or swelling around the eye gets worse

If you call the clinic after clinic hours, you will be told how to get in touch with the eye doctor on call. There is an eye doctor on call every day of the year.

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