

Addressing LASIK MYTHS

Time to straighten the facts on LASIK surgery By Dr Lee Sao Bing

Anyone who has ever worn specs would gladly exchange this visual aid for perfect vision eyes. What's the hold back then? Well, there have been myths going around the mills and more often than not, they are exactly what they are – myths! See if these myths are the ones you've heard about so you can finally put them to rest.

MYTH LASIK INVOLVES A HIGH DEGREE OF RISK.

TRUTH LASIK is a very safe and effective procedure for ideal candidates, with more than a million people undergoing LASIK eye surgery each year. With the advancement of LASIK technology and medical processes, the documented risk of complications occurring in LASIK surgery is less than one per cent with many of the complications (such as dry eyes and night visual disturbances)

treatable, if diagnosed at the early stages.

An extremely important measure prior to proceeding with LASIK is determining your specific needs and suitability for LASIK surgery, where you will be required to undergo a comprehensive pre-operative assessment to ensure that you are not at risk of complications.

MYTH THERE IS A HIGH RISK OF COMPLICATIONS OCCURRING DUE TO EYE MOVEMENTS DURING SURGERY.

TRUTH There are systems in place during surgery to ensure that the patients' eye movements do not negatively affect the outcome of their procedures. Rest assured that with advanced computerised tracking systems that monitor

eye movements, as well as the experience and skills of your doctor, surgical procedures are very precise and safe.

MYTH THE SURGERY PROCEDURE IS A PAINFUL PROCESS.

TRUTH While many may be afraid that they will experience pain during the procedure, there is really nothing to worry about. A mild sedative is given to patients to ensure that they remain comfortable and they are given a topical anaesthetic (eye drops) to numb the eye, so they experience no pain during the procedure. When the doctor applies the suction ring (to hold it in position in order to maintain the pressure in the eye), the patient experiences a sensation of pressure just before his or her vision fades for a few seconds. The laser does not cause any pain or discomfort.

For several hours after the procedure, many patients

describe mild sensations similar to that of opening the eyes while swimming in chlorinated water.

MYTH MY NORMAL ROUTINE AND LIFESTYLE WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY POST SURGERY DISRUPTIONS.

TRUTH Most activities can be resumed immediately after surgery and most patients achieve good vision with their eyes feeling fairly normal within the day of surgery. However, you will have to refrain from rubbing your eyes and prevent foreign materials (such as soap water) from entering your eyes for a week after surgery.

Moreover, activities such as contact sports and swimming should be avoided for several weeks. It is possible for vision to fluctuate for a few weeks as your eyes take on the healing process. Usually, it will take around a week for full healing to occur and your new improved





vision to be established completely.

MYTH LASIK IS EXPENSIVE.

TRUTH LASIK is an easy decision for most people after calculating savings from not having to purchase glasses, contact lenses and solution, particularly now with LASIK becoming more reasonably priced. Plus assigning a cost to the ability to check on your



children in the middle of the night, and seeing the alarm clock in the morning without searching for your glasses on your nightstand is almost priceless for many.

MYTH WITH LASIK I WILL NEVER HAVE TO WEAR GLASSES AGAIN.

TRUTH It should be noted that while LASIK generally removes the dependence for glasses, there are exceptions

where glasses are still required for certain activities. This is particularly so in the case of patients with high myopia and/or high astigmatism who would still need to use glasses when it comes to driving at night.

The same would apply to those over the age of 40, who would require reading glasses due to presbyopia, a symptom caused by the natural course of ageing. It is always important to be well informed and educated on the benefits and risks of the procedure to maintain realistic expectations about the procedure's outcome.

MYTH THERE'S NO POINT IN GOING FOR LASIK TO CORRECT MY MYOPIA, AS I WILL EVENTUALLY NEED TO WEAR GLASSES TO CORRECT PRESBYOPIA WHEN I'M APPROACHING MY 40S.

TRUTH If you correct myopia with LASIK now, you won't have to use two different glasses for both myopia and presbyopia. If you have both conditions already, LASIK can help you achieve monovision, where one eye is corrected for short-sightedness and the other eye is corrected for presbyopia. ♥

Dr Lee Sao Bing is the Clinical Director and Consultant Eye Specialist at Shinagawa Lasik Centre.