

Intern's Perspective on LASIK Surgery

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Reviewed by Dr. Emil W. Chynn

When most people undergo LASIK surgery, they are filled with anxiety concerning the many postoperative risks involved, and even the remote possibility of the complete loss of sight. However, the best treatment for this apprehension is to be a well-informed patient.

I happened to be interning at IWANT.2020 for the past year, and was well aware of the procedures before, during and after the surgery. My vision was -2.75D (diopters) in my right eye with a bit of astigmatism and -3.25D in my left eye, meaning that I seeing worse than 20/200. The 20/200 line on the Snellen's chart is the top (or second depending on the eye chart) letter "E." However, no amount of procedural knowledge prepares you when you, the patient, are undergoing the surgery. It is a different world.

I read all the materials regarding LASIK surgery; I read all the statistics and I understood my risks. I even took a couple of opportunities to observe first-hand the LASIK procedure performed on other patients. Nevertheless, on the day of my surgery I showed a bit of anxiety. When I tried to relax, I slept and listened to some music while waiting, and, although I felt that I was in control, I took the suggested sedative Valium to pacify my nerves.

Upon entering the operating room, I found myself in utter disbelief that I was actually undergoing this surgery, and that I might come out for better or for worse. However, I knew Dr. Chynn's record and his success rate, and I trusted his ability, so I knew that had reason to worry. I tried to keep my mind off the surgery and I focused instead on the music playing in the background. To

prevent my eyes from wondering, I concentrated on keeping my mind in a state of relaxation.

The surgery itself did not last longer than 5 minutes. I followed Dr. Chynn's instructions down to the last detail. I took my time and I positioned myself as comfortably as possible, and when I had to stare, I did exactly as Dr. Chynn directed. The laser fired for about 30-35 seconds for each eye. I found it to be painless. Some may think that the laser causes some discomfort, equivalent to getting a paper cut. However, from my experience, I could not even feel discomfort when the laser was firing. It was a remarkable, and surprisingly quick and easy. At the end of the surgery, I was able to tell the time off the clock in the surgery room. Although my vision was slightly blurry immediately after the surgery, this occurrence is normal directly following the surgery because the eyes are in need of rest.

After 30 minutes, I was already able to see 20/30 with both eyes upon examination by Dr. Chynn. After the examination, I was allowed to leave with my care-bag. I went home and immediately went to sleep. Prior to the surgery, it is a great idea to purchase a humidifier, because the moist air helps with the healing process. It is also a good idea to turn on some comfortable music. I also strongly recommended that you use your antibiotics, steroids, and preservative-free eye lubrication as directed. Also, during your first five nights, use your protective goggles. Above all, do not do anything strenuous after your surgery. After surgery, your eyes are very fatigued and it is important that they are not subject to any unnecessary stress.

If you follow your instructions, you will achieve amazing results from your surgery. The next morning, I woke up in complete disbelief because I felt that I had fallen asleep with my glasses on. Never have I seen in my life images so sharp and so vivid. It was a complete and intense feeling of satisfaction.

On the following day, I came in for a follow up and I was seeing better than 20/20! I also plugged my eyes to help keep them moist. The plugs are necessary for the recovery process. The week following the surgery, I was able to seeing better than 20/20 with both eyes. Even to this day, my vision is still improving. However, it is a gradual healing process so you must be patient. The key to success is to follow the doctor's orders. Apply the steroids and antibiotics as directed, and come in during your scheduled follow-ups. Most of all, apply the lubrications to your eyes 4x a day or more. Moreover, continue using your humidifier! Take good care of your eyes and treat them with V.I.P status. The better you treat your eyes, the better your outcome will be.

Currently, because of my experience, we are currently developing the first LASIK simulator, so that patients can learn and practice in a realistic setting before their surgery. Our website will be www.lasiktraining.com, and is currently under construction.