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Fact vs. Fiction: Top 10 LASIK Myths and the Truths Behind Them

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Fiction: LASIK is not a real surgery.

Fact: LASIK is surgery and should be treated as such. With proper care, it is not a dangerous or risky procedure. Although it is completely painless, there are risks associated with LASIK, as there are with any surgical procedure. However, several clinical studies have identified the chance of serious vision-reducing complications as less than 1%.

Fiction: Complications should be expected after having laser vision correction. Night glare and dry eyes are frequent complications from the procedure.

Fact: As with any other surgery, there are risks associated with laser vision correction. However, the complication rate is low and not as high as many reports have indicated. Several clinical studies of laser vision correction have documented the risk of having a serious vision-reducing complication as less than 1%. Many complications can be treated if they are identified early on and attended to by a skilled doctor.

Proper screenings before the procedure can identify patients who are at a high risk for complications and can prevent them from having the procedure. Although night glare can be common immediately following the procedure, it will typically last just three to six months. A dry eye sensation is common among



patients immediately after LASIK. However, most patients' symptoms also decrease over a period of three to six months. Proper screenings before the procedure can identify patients at high risk for night glare, dry eyes and other complications. Responsible providers will recommend these patients not have the procedure.

Fiction: Laser vision correction is so new that no one really knows if there are any long-term side effects.

Fact: Although laser vision correction became widely available in the United States in the mid-1990s, the technology was first developed in the early 1980s. The first patient was treated in the United States in 1987 and is still 20/20 more than a decade later. To date, no long-term ill effects of the procedure are known.

Fiction: There is only one type of laser used to treat all patients.

Fact: Actually, there are a variety of lasers that can be used to treat a patient's eyes. After a proper screening and confirmation of the condition that needs to be corrected for, a surgeon can identify the most appropriate laser needed to treat your condition. Surgeons affiliated with a network of centers generally have access to a wider variety of lasers, ensuring that their patients are treated with the laser best suited for their condition.

Fiction: It does not matter which doctor performs your procedure, the outcomes are all the same because the laser does all the work.

Fact: The surgeon's skill and the level of care he offers is an essential element in the success of any LASIK procedure. The laser is one of the tools that the surgeon uses to perform the procedure. The surgeon must also create and manipulate the corneal flap, a delicate surgical procedure.

Two of the most important contributors to the success of the surgery are the pre- and post-operative care. The best pre- and post-operative care can be provided

if your surgeon works closely with your own personal eye doctor, who is most familiar with your eyes and will continue to care for you years after your procedure. The surgeon, the LASIK technicians and your own eye doctor should work as a team to provide you with the best possible outcome.

Fiction: The best indication of a surgeon's ability is the number of procedures he or she has performed.

Fact: Surgeons should not be judged solely on the number of procedures they have performed. Anyone considering the procedure, should do their homework before selecting a surgeon. Potential patients should first consult their own eye doctor to determine if they are a candidate and for recommendations on surgeons. At some networks, such as TLC Laser Eye Centers Inc., surgeons undergo a rigorous review process. You should also consult your family and friends who have had LASIK to ask them about their experiences with surgeons.

Fiction: LASIK can forever end patients' need for glasses.

Fact: While LASIK has proven to be overwhelmingly successful in reducing dependence on glasses and contact lenses, the degree of improvement may vary depending on the individual. Each patient's need for glasses depends on how well he/she heals and the severity of the patient's original prescription. Most patients with mild to moderate prescriptions can achieve 20/20 vision or within 1 to 2 lines of 20/20 on the eye chart. Such success can end a patient's dependence on vision aids for driving, sports and watching television or movies. During the pre-surgical screening, your doctor should be able to determine the range of your probable outcomes. Keep in mind, as a patient ages the need for reading glasses is quite common.

Fiction: Anyone who wants to have LASIK is a candidate.

Fact: Not everyone is an appropriate candidate for LASIK. In fact, often more than 10% of the potential patients evaluated by many reputable providers

are not considered candidates for the surgery. The best way to determine if you are a candidate is to undergo a thorough screening by your eye doctor. LASIK can treat patients with nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. Appropriate candidates must be at least 18 years old, in good health and have healthy eyes free of diseases such as cataracts and glaucoma. Appropriate screening is the first, and one of the most important steps in preventing complications. Often complications result when surgeons operate on patients who are not appropriate candidates.

Fiction: Because the outcomes are all the same, the cheapest surgery is no different than the most expensive one.

Fact: The old adage, "You get what you pay for," also applies to laser vision correction. Patients should remember that they only have one set of eyes and it's probably not a good place to compromise. Patients should be cautious of discount centers who rely heavily on volume and may not be as focused on patient screening and care. Consumers should make sure they are comparing equivalent care and experience when doing their research. Often the more expensive procedures include added benefits that discounters do not offer. These added benefits can include lifetime commitments and follow-up care with your personal eye doctor.

Fiction: LASIK is still being developed, and new technologies are being introduced every year. Patients might be best served waiting until doctors find the best one.

Fact: The current LASIK technologies allow the procedure to be completed more safely, faster and with fewer complications than ever before. Many LASIK surgeons themselves have had laser vision correction performed on their own eyes. New technologies introduced in the future should make LASIK available to a wider group of potential patients whose vision cannot currently be corrected.

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