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QUESTIONS TO ASK OF A LASIK SURGEON

The following questions are based on nationally published information regarding minimum qualifications for an experienced LASIK surgeon.

1. What is the surgeon's training?

Make sure that at the very least the surgeon has an ophthalmology degree. As LASIK becomes more popular, a wider range of M.D.s are doing the procedure, some who have no formal training in ophthalmology. You also want to ask where their training was completed.

2. What is the surgeon's specialty?

It is very important that your surgeon has completed a one-year fellowship in corneal surgery. Since LASIK is performed on the cornea, you want someone who is an expert in that area. If a non-corneal specialist does your LASIK procedure and there are complications, they will end up sending you to a corneal specialist to have them fixed. Also, by starting with a trained corneal specialist who is experienced with LASIK, you are reducing your chance for complications in the first place.

3. How many LASIK procedures has the surgeon performed?

Current published reports suggest that an experienced surgeon has done at least 1000 LASIK procedures. The complication rate for under 1000 procedures performed is 5% as opposed to a less than 1% complication rate for surgeons who have completed more than 1000 procedures. Beware: sometimes when less experienced surgeons are asked how many *LASIK* procedures they have performed, they will respond with the number of *laser* procedures (a significantly higher number) they have performed. Don't fall for this. They are not the same procedure. Ask specifically about *LASIK* numbers. By the end of their residency, every ophthalmologist will have performed hundreds of laser procedures but they may not have performed a single LASIK.

4. What equipment is used for the exam and the procedure?

Not all equipment is the same. You want to make sure that you will be getting a cycloplegic exam prior to the procedure. The most advanced technology for mapping your eye is done with the Orbscan by Bausch & Lomb. We have found that we eliminate more patients now that this equipment is available. It is also important that during the testing process they check your pupil size with the Colvard, or other, Pupilometer. Make sure they are using a Hansatome, the most advanced microkeratome available. The most advanced laser system available today is Alcon WaveLight EX500. This system provides active eye tracking so you don't have to worry about holding still. Though other lasers are also available, the WaveLight EX500 system has the widest range of correction and the most advanced LASIK technology in the world. Please ask your doctor for more information on WaveLight EX500 and the many benefits of this system.



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5. How accessible is the surgeon if you want to see him/her?

Quality care means that the surgeon is involved in the pre-operative exam, the procedure itself, and post-operative care. Make sure that you are not getting a “shooter,” a surgeon who only does the surgery and does not do any other care ahead of or after the surgery. The number one complaint from unhappy patients is that the surgeon was unavailable to them once the surgery was complete.

6. Does the surgeon keep statistical information on how the patients’ results turn out?

If a practice does not keep track of their patients, turn and run. Every practice should be able to tell you what percentage of their patients achieve their best corrected vision and, if it is not achieved, how far off they are. Ask to see information on your specific range. Usually ranges are broken up in the following way: Mild = 0 to -3.00 , Moderate = -3.00 to -6.00 , High = -6.00 to -9.00 , Severe = over -9.00 . You want to be with a practice where at least 96% are no more than two lines from their best corrected vision.

7. Does the surgeon have a minimum diopter requirement to do an enhancement?

An enhancement means that you have a second procedure to fine-tune your results. Some practices require that you have one diopter of correction available before they will do an enhancement. That amount of correction would not be comfortable and you would not be happy. Make sure the practice is willing to go as low as .5 diopters of correction for an enhancement if it is really bothering the patient. Make sure the enhancement is included as part of the package price.

8. What is the surgeon’s enhancement rate?

Typically enhancement rates can be anywhere from 10–30%. A low enhancement rate does not necessarily mean that the results are usually good. It depends on what the minimum requirements are for an enhancement. If a practice requires one diopter of correction (as discussed above) and their enhancement rate is 10%, then the practice probably has a lot of patients who are not absolutely happy with their vision. However, if a practice allows for .5 diopters of correction and their enhancement rate is 15%, it is highly likely that patients are getting better results in the end.