

## LASIK: What and Whom is it Good For?

Anyone required to wear corrective lenses to see clearly, either in the form of glasses or contact lenses, has probably wondered about the vision correction procedure known as LASIK. Laser Assisted In-Situ Keratomileusis (LASIK) is an elective procedure chosen by people seeking to improve their vision and reduce or eliminate their reliance on corrective lenses. Like all medical procedures, LASIK has its limitations, risks and benefits. But for certain vision impairments and lifestyles, LASIK is an option worth considering.

### What types of vision can LASIK correct?

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the technologies used in LASIK to treat myopia, hyperopia and astigmatism in adults:

**Myopia:** People with myopia, or nearsightedness, have more difficulty seeing objects at a distance as opposed to objects close by. LASIK treats myopia by flattening the central corneal surface, enabling light to focus on the retina.

**Hyperopia:** People with hyperopia, or farsightedness, have more difficulty seeing objects nearby as clearly as objects in the distance. LASIK treats hyperopia by reshaping the outer edge of the cornea, causing the center to steepen and increase its focusing power.

**Astigmatism:** Caused by an oval-shaped eye, people with astigmatism see distorted objects whether it is close up or far away. LASIK treats astigmatism by eliminating the irregularities in the cornea to sharpen its focusing ability.

### Who Benefits From LASIK?

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Many chose to have LASIK to improve their appearance, free themselves from the inconvenience of glasses and contacts, improve their self-esteem, as well as correct their vision. While everyone appreciates seeing clearly, certain lifestyles and careers are obviously enhanced by reducing the barriers to immediate, focused vision that glasses and contact lenses can represent. Some examples of these lifestyles include:

- **First responders:** Critical personnel including military, police and firefighters rely heavily on their eyesight to perform their duties in emergencies. Glasses and contact lenses are not only inconvenient, but can represent a safety hazard if corrective lenses are lost, broken or compromised when responding to an incident.
- **Rugged or extreme lifestyle:** Snowboarders, surfers, rock climbers, mountain bikers and other action sports enthusiasts prefer hassle-free vision to enjoy their active lifestyles. With a high probability of impact and flying debris, glasses and contact lenses can represent an unnecessary risk for these risk-takers. Once broken, lost or fogged up, glasses are rendered ineffective and, perhaps, become dangerous. Contacts are not FDA approved for use in the water and can cause infection due to exposure to bacteria and other microorganisms.
- **Parents and caregivers:** Young children require vigilance to keep them safe, making clear vision a priority for parents. Fumbling for glasses in the middle of the night to attend to a scared child, frail elder or respond to an emergency can be challenging. Caring for others can leave little time for proper contact lens maintenance, leaving the caregiver open to eye infections.