
PRK

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Photorefractive Keratectomy, commonly referred to as PRK, is a vision correction procedure which uses an Excimer Laser to reshape the surface of the cornea, the transparent outer portion of the eye.

First performed in the 1980's, the use of an Excimer Laser for performing PRK for treatment of myopia (nearsightedness) received FDA approval in the United States in 1995. This is the use for which PRK is most commonly performed. In 1998, it was also approved for hyperopia (farsightedness). After its approval, and until the approval of the use of lasers for LASIK, PRK was the most popular form of corrective eye surgery and continues to be regularly performed. It is often used for patients who are not good candidates for LASIK, but still fit within the appropriate criteria for refractive eye surgery. This can include patients with thin corneas, dry eyes, corneal dystrophies, corneal scars, or recurrent corneal erosions.

PRK is elective same day surgery. Under eye drop topical anesthesia, the central surface cells of the cornea (epithelium) are removed either mechanically or chemically. Next, the Excimer Laser is used to reshape the cornea to lessen or eliminate the patient's need for spectacles or contact lenses. The surgery is typically painless and usually takes only a few minutes. The surgery is performed on one eye at a time. Sometimes both eyes will be treated on the same day, but frequently they are done a week or more apart in order to allow healing and vision restoration.



Initially, drops are placed in your eyes to anesthetize them, providing you with a greater level of comfort and reducing their sensitivity. A special tool is gently placed to hold your eyelids open. The doctor monitors your surgery through a microscope ensuring the eye remains in the correct position throughout the procedure. Most modern Excimer Lasers have a tracking device that will follow the eye through small movements during the surgery have a tracking device that will follow the inevitable small movements of the eye during the procedure.

During PRK, the outermost surface cells of the cornea are removed by the doctor using either special chemicals, tools or a laser. As you watch a target light, the cornea is reshaped using an Excimer Laser based on calculations the doctor has made and entered into the laser's computer. The more correction your eye needs, the longer the laser will work, but the duration is typically less than one minute. You will not be able to see the laser, but you will hear a clicking noise as it works. This is completely normal. It is also common to smell an acrid odor as the laser performs the reshaping.

Once the reshaping is completed, a bandage contact lens is placed over the surgery area to protect the eye and facilitate healing. This bandage contact will typically be in place for 2 to 5 days. During the next 3 to 5 days, the outer layer of the cornea regenerates. Mild to moderate discomfort with

blurry vision during this time is possible. You will be checked frequently after surgery to monitor healing.

The directions which your doctor gives to you should be carefully followed. This can include the use of medications to reduce inflammation and the risk of infection, avoiding rubbing of the eye, eliminating strenuous activity for a given period and other things your doctor feels are required for your particular situation.

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