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The Latest in LASIK: Custom Treatment for Your Eyes Only

By Joe Kelly

Question: Have you resisted LASIK surgery, worried that the results wouldn't justify the cost?

Answer: Take another look says Dr. Colman Kraff, a leading Chicago ophthalmologist. The latest custom LASIK treatments are bringing about an era of enhanced vision and treatments for a wider range of conditions, such as age-related presbyopia (i.e., no more reading glasses.)

Like a fingerprint, everyone's eyes are different. But when it comes to the hugely popular LASIK treatments to improve visual acuity, the eyes have been treated with almost relentless uniformity.

Now that's changing. The newest LASIK technologies can create a far more precise mapping of your eye's anatomy—hundreds of individual data points—and then use that information to guide the laser during surgery. The procedure is done entirely with the laser—there is no blade used. The result is a greater level of individualized vision correction.

Seeing fine detail

"In the past, two people with the same prescription would receive nearly identical LASIK treatments," said Dr. Colman Kraff, director of Refractive Surgery at the Kraff Eye Institute in Chicago. "Now our ability to precisely target a wide range of irregularities in the cornea means we can do much better. We can enable improvements in seeing fine detail, in low light situations and at night. We can dramatically reduce complications involving glare and halos. We can achieve better than 20/20 vision, what some people call HD vision."

The Kraff Eye Institute has been a pioneer in custom LASIK. Dr. Kraff was a principal investigator in trials that led to FDA approval of iLasik, from Abbott Medical Optics. He believes the next step will be broadening the use of custom LASIK to address conditions such as presbyopia—the inability to focus on things up close that afflicts people as they age. "Today we can address presbyopia by over correcting one eye and under correcting the other. But the next horizon is to use custom LASIK to do bifocal reshaping of the cornea."

Finding the right candidates

LASIK surgery is not for everyone—it still might not deliver enough improvement or worse, could cause side effects such as glare and eye pain "A large number of people with poor eyesight are simply better off staying with glasses or contacts," said Dr. Gary Tracy, a Manhattan-based optometrist. "I always tell people, 'This is elective surgery. Proceed cautiously.' One of the outcomes of the newer LASIK technology is that it makes it easier to identify who is a good candidate and who isn't."