

What it is

The cornea, the clear dome at the front of your eye, does about two thirds of your focusing. Laser eye surgery reshapes it so the correction is built into your own tissue. The reshaping is permanent, nothing is implanted, and nothing needs replacing later.

The three main procedures

- **LASIK:** a thin hinged flap is lifted, the tissue beneath reshaped, the flap replaced. Fastest recovery, most patients see well the next day.
- **SMILE:** no flap. A small disc of tissue is removed through a tiny incision. Fewer corneal nerves cut, so milder early dry eye. Vision sharpens slightly more slowly.
- **Surface treatment (PRK):** the corneal skin layer is removed and the surface reshaped. Safest where the cornea is thinner, but the first three to five days are uncomfortable and vision takes weeks to sharpen.

The right procedure is a clinical decision made after your scans, not a menu choice, and it is not decided by price.

Am I suitable?

Usually yes if you are over 21, your prescription has been stable for a year, and your corneas are healthy and thick enough. We decline more patients than many clinics: an irregular corneal scan, a cornea too thin for the correction, an unstable prescription or a significantly dry eye surface are all reasons to say no. If laser is wrong for you, an implantable lens or lens replacement may be right, and we offer both.

Your alternatives

Glasses carry no surgical risk. Contact lenses are not risk free: serious corneal infection affects roughly 2 in 10 000 daily wear soft lens wearers each year, rising to around 20 in 10 000 for those who sleep in them.

Screening is the safety mechanism

The most serious complication of corneal laser surgery is ectasia, a progressive weakening of the cornea, and the strongest predictor is an abnormal scan beforehand. Your assessment includes corneal tomography, thickness measurement, epithelial mapping and dry eye assessment. If anything is borderline, we do not proceed that day.

Recovery

- **LASIK and SMILE:** watering and haze on day one. Most patients are driving and back at work within a week.
- **Surface treatment:** days two to five are the most uncomfortable, with a bandage contact lens in place. Vision sharpens steadily over several weeks.
- **Do not rub your eyes,** especially in the first week after LASIK. No swimming or eye makeup for two weeks.
- **Final result** at three to six months for all procedures.

How well does it work?

Across 97 studies covering 67 893 eyes, 99.5 per cent of eyes achieved unaided vision of 20/40 or better, above the UK driving standard, and 90.9 per cent were within 0.50 dioptre of target. A world literature review of 2198 patients found 95.4 per cent satisfaction. Your own likely result depends on your prescription and corneal measurements, and we will give you an individual estimate.

Main risks

Loss of two or more lines of best corrected vision occurred in 0.61 per cent of eyes. Ectasia is rare and largely prevented by screening rather than managed afterwards. LASIK carries a small flap-related risk that SMILE and surface treatment do not.

Expected side effects

These are not complications. Dry eye is the most common and the most often understated, usually most noticeable in the first three to six months and milder after SMILE. Halos and starbursts around lights at night are common early and usually settle over three to six months.

Costs, both eyes

- **LASIK or surface treatment:** from £4,500.
- **Blended vision or high prescription:** from £5,000.
- **SMILE or presbyopia correction:** from £5,500.
- **Consultation free.** Advanced diagnostic scans £250.

VAT exempt. The fee includes your consultation, planning, the procedure, discharge medication and two post-operative review appointments. Further appointments are included at no charge if an enhancement is indicated or a complication has occurred.

Enhancement

Fully covered where the residual error is at least 1.00 dioptre or includes significant astigmatism, your refraction is stable across two measurements three months apart, and the eye is suitable for further treatment. The window is 12 months, automatically extended to 24 months where a refinement is likely to be needed.

This page is a summary, not a consent document

It does not replace the full Laser Eye Surgery patient information booklet, which contains the complete information on risks, alternatives, limitations and aftercare, and which forms part of your informed consent alongside your consultation, your summary letter and your consent form. Please read the full booklet before your consultation. bluefinvision.com/laser-eye-surgery