Partners in Vision
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CATARACT & LASIK CENTER of Utah
Seeing is Believing.

Customizing LASIK for Patients over Age 40

For individuals from 18 to 40 years of age, LASIK is a wonderful procedure for the treatment of nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism. Once the distance vision is corrected with the laser, near vision is also excellent and the individual is truly free from the need for eyeglasses or contact lenses. The situation is more complex when one enters the 40's which are the so-called "bifocal years". From this time forward, one's distance prescription is different from the near prescription which requires multi-focal lenses for clear vision at all distances. While LASIK can reshape the corneal curvature to provide clearer vision at any given distance, it cannot compensate for the loss of lens elasticity which results in one's inability to focus naturally at all distances in the later years of life.

Some individuals over 40 who are a little nearsighted may elect not to undergo LASIK if they do not mind wearing glasses for distance but prefer to read without them. However, those with astigmatism, farsightedness, or higher degrees of nearsightedness do not have this option since their vision is not really clear at any distance that is useful for their work or hobbies. Hence, there are really four LASIK options for individuals with these visual difficulties:

1) LASIK can be performed to correct distance vision optimally for both eyes with the expectation that the individual will need glasses for close work such as reading and intermediate distance (computer or piano). Truck and taxi drivers are often in this category. These are the individuals who are willing to sacrifice good reading ability without glasses, with the hope of obtaining "20/20" distance vision.

2) Mono-vision LASIK can be performed to correct the dominant eye optimally for distance and the non-dominant eye for close range (reading). This has the theoretical advantage of allowing the individual to eliminate glasses all together. However, depth perception may be compromised with this technique, since one eye will be blurred for distance while the other eye will be blurred for near. Mono-vision works best for those who have already tried it successfully with contact lenses.

3) LASIK can be performed with a mild under-correction for distance to allow better vision at either close or intermediate range (computer or piano). Office or other indoor work typically demands better vision at or inside arms length. If an individual is content to sacrifice a little distance vision (20/30 to 20/40), this may be the appropriate choice for that individual. Routine daytime driving may be preserved with this technique with glasses necessary only for nighttime, rainy or snowy conditions. 20/20 vision does not always equal 20/happy vision if an individual spends most of the time working at closer distances.

4) Modified mono-vision works very well for most individuals. The dominant eye is corrected for distance (making it blurry for close range). The non-dominant is slightly under-corrected for distance so that the intermediate distance (just inside arms length) is better. The difference between the eyes is negligible so depth perception is not a problem. Glasses for close range may still be necessary. This technique is most popular since most individuals undergoing LASIK are willing to submit to glasses for sedentary activities in exchange for the freedom to see without corrective lenses while engaging in a more active lifestyle.