

Monday, March 30, 2009

Ask the Doctor:

Q: Options to reading glasses?

A: As we get older, the lens inside our eye loses flexibility, making it difficult to see up close. Non-surgical options can help, such as bifocal contact lenses or monovision contact lenses, where one eye is corrected for distance and the other eye is corrected for near vision. Surgical options include monovision procedures using Lasik, PRK (photorefractive keratectomy) and CK (conductive keratoplasty), or refractive lens exchange (RLE), in which sophisticated intraocular lenses replace your natural lens to improve both distance and near vision. The latest generation of dynamically focused intraocular lenses can mimic the flexibility of our own lens when it was young.

Q: I want to have Lasik but how do I know if it's right for me?

A: While Lasik is one of the most common procedures performed, sophisticated pre-operative screening will determine if Lasik is right for you. Patients with certain prescriptions, corneal features and vision needs may do better with options such as PRK, implantable contact lenses; which can be removed and replaced, RLE or nonsurgical options such as vision therapy, which are designed to strengthen eye muscles to work in a more coordinated manner. Lasik surgery has advanced and now surgeons use two lasers instead of one, as in earlier forms of the procedure. This combination of technologies has resulted in superior safety and vision results, which in 2007, led NASA and the U.S. Air Force to approve "all-laser" Lasik for its pilots and astronauts.

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Ella G. Faktorovich, M.D., is a corneal and refractive surgeon in San Francisco and founder of the Pacific Vision Institute. Go to www.pacificvision.org for more information about clinical care and research at PVI. The questions above are commonly asked of Faktorovich. Have a question for the doctor? E-mail it to askthedrs@sfnchronicle.com. Include your full name, address, town and phone number. We will answer as many as we can.



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Life in Focus

Dr. Ella Faktorovich founded Pacific Vision Institute in 1998. Her commitment to advancing refractive options for patients has led her to be considered one California's leading ophthalmologists. She is one of the first surgeons in San Francisco to have performed LASIK vision correction. To date she has performed tens of thousands of procedures. She is listed in the Best Doctors in America and in the Top 100 Health Professionals in the World.