



FEELING GOOD AND LOOKING GOOD

By Jenny Le Coq

Keeping the “windows to your soul” clear and healthy

The eyes are more than windows to our souls; they are clues to our health and well-being. I spoke with Dr. Ella Faktorovich, a prominent San Francisco ophthalmologist and Director of Cornea and Refractive surgery at Pacific Vision Institute, to learn more about the importance of optimal vision care – from vision threatening lifestyles and itchy tired eyes, to the newest options in LASIK surgery.

What is the single biggest threat to healthy vision?

Although genetic factors are strong determinants of sharp visual acuity and accidents are the leading cause of blindness, the sun is the most widespread threat to healthy vision. Unprotected exposure to ultraviolet (UV) and high-energy visible (HEV) light may result in damage to your eyes that in some cases, is irreversible. Sun damage to the eye can result in a number of conditions:

- Pterygia or pingueculae – tissue growth on the surface of the eye which can make the eyes look red, feel irritated, and result in blocked or decreased vision.
- Photokeratitis – a corneal irritation caused by exposure to intense sunlight while skiing, snowboarding, water skiing, and boating can cause tearing, light sensitivity, and temporary decrease in vision.
- Cataracts – Studies have concluded that exposure to UV light may cause cataracts; which are one of the leading cause of vision loss worldwide.
- Macular Degeneration – Research has shown that HEV sun light may cause macular degeneration; a medical condition where vision is lost because of damage to the retina.
- Wrinkles – Squinting is your eye’s attempt to limit

it’s exposure to sunlight. But squinting will cause wrinkles to develop more rapidly around your eyes.

What steps can you take to protect your eyes from harmful light rays?

- Don’t compromise on buying quality sunglasses that best protect your eyes. Choose sunglasses with 99-100% protection from both UVA and UVB rays. This should be clearly labeled on any sunglasses you buy.
- Do wear sunglasses outdoors; when it’s sunny or cloudy, and even in the shade.
- Do wear sunglasses even if you wear contacts or intraocular lenses that have UV block.
- Do choose bronze, copper, or reddish brown lenses – they will block HEV rays and UV rays.
- Don’t wear pink, blue, or green tinted lenses - these may block UV rays but will not block HEV rays.
- Do wear wide brimmed hat and/or wrap around sunglasses.
- Don’t forget sunglasses for your kids – they may spend more time outdoors than you do and sun damage is cumulative.

What is the cause and treatment of dry eyes?

Often referred to as dry eye syndrome, this is caused by reduced production of tears and moisture in the eyes. The result is discomfort in the eyes that ranges from moderate pain to a grainy and scratchy discomfort. Factors that cause dry eyes include excessive computer use, hormonal changes in women, certain medications, environmental factors such as pollution or dry windy air and contact lens wear, which is the leading cause.

Many treatments exist to improve the health of the oil glands, including warm compresses, lid scrubs with baby shampoo, eating a diet rich in Omega-3 and -6 fatty acids, and ointments. There is now a new way to treat this condition; Intense Pulsed Light (IPL). IPL

is most commonly used in skin care clinics to rejuvenate the skin and to remove unwanted hair as well as shrink skin capillaries. Your treatment options may include tear duct plugs which will limit loss of tear film, use of artificial tears or an alternative to contacts such as eyeglasses or LASIK.

To know the specific causes of your dry eyes, you should consult an eye doctor.

What are new advancements in vision correction surgery?

Vision correction surgery has experienced significant advancements over the past few years. Today, many different options exist to help the majority of people who wear glasses or contact lenses reduce or eliminate their dependence on their corrective lenses. While LASIK is one of the most common procedures performed, sophisticated pre-operative screening will determine if LASIK is right for you.

- All-laser IntraLASIK - The distinction between traditional LASIK and IntraLASIK is the replacement of the manual surgical approach using a surgical blade with an all-laser approach that incorporates the use of the femtosecond laser; the fastest laser in the world. With the introduction of all-laser LASIK, virtually all intra-operative complications from laser vision correction are eliminated, resulting in optimal safety and vision results. This combination of technologies has recently led NASA and the U.S. Air Force to approve “all-laser” LASIK for its pilots and astronauts. Within hours of the all-laser IntraLASIK procedure there is obvious vision improvement and a normal routine can typically resume the following day.
- PRK – Patients with certain prescriptions, corneal features and vision needs may do better with options such as PRK. With PRK, we can correct thinner corneas and those with certain conditions requiring treatment of the superficial corneal layers. Multiple studies, including those done in the military, indicate that the ultimate vision outcomes after PRK are similar to those after LASIK and IntraLASIK.
- Implantable contact lenses (ICL) - While LASIK is one of the most common procedures performed, it is not right for everyone. Patients with certain prescriptions and vision needs may do better with non-laser procedures such as

implantable collamer lenses (ICL), for example. ICL is a biocompatible collagen placed behind the cornea. While it provides a permanent correction, the ICL may be removed or replaced if the prescription or future technology makes it appropriate.

- Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE) – RLE is performed for patients who are experiencing a deterioration of reading distance vision. In the Refractive Lens Exchange procedure, a presbyopia correcting multifocal or accommodating lens in a non-laser corrective procedure where the natural lens of the eye is removed and replaced with an artificial lens with the patient’s unique correction built in. The lens works by providing simultaneous near, mid and distance vision in each eye, thus allowing both eyes to work together to enable vision over all distances. RLE is meant to be permanent, however if the patient’s vision changes throughout the years, LASIK can be performed to fine tune their prescription. Additionally, the patient does not have to worry about developing cataracts later in life, as the natural lens is removed during the procedure and replaced with the new multifocal lens.
- Vision therapy – nonsurgical options to refractive surgery are designed to strengthen eye muscles to work in a more coordinated manner.

Can pregnant women undergo LASIK surgery?

It is recommended that women have LASIK or other vision correction surgery before they conceive; as pregnancy may cause a temporary change in vision and because of hormonal changes during pregnancy, women can experience dry eyes. It is also recommended that women wait 30 days after childbirth to have vision correction surgery, so their eyes and hormones can adjust to normal. There is no risk at all for women who are breastfeeding to have vision correction surgery such as LASIK.

Dr. Ella Faktorovich, M.D., is a San Francisco ophthalmologist. Her commitment to advancing vision care options for patients has led her to be considered one of the country’s leading vision correction surgeons. For more information about the topics discussed in this article, you can contact Dr. Ella Faktorovich directly at 415 922-9500 or visit her website at www.pacificvision.org