

CBS 11 Investigates Lasik Surgery



A CBS 11 investigation uncovers important information for anyone considering lasik surgery. Some call it a miracle... and for millions of people, the surgery has cleared up blurry vision. But there is something you should know before going in for this life-changing procedure. Paul Rountree had lasik surgery at the TLC Laser Eye Center in Arlington, a company so famous, golf pro Tiger Woods is on its website stating "I feel like I've experienced a miracle and it only took 20 minutes." But in the time Rountree was at TLC, he says the laser damaged his eyes.

Reporter: "You can't cry?" Paul Rountree "I can hold my head over a bowl of fresh cut onions and my eyes will not produce water. That's how bad it is."

Before surgery, Rountree was examined by 3 doctors. One diagnosed him with "Dry Eye Syndrome," but according to Rountree, the doctor never told him.

Dr. James McCulley chairs the UT Southwestern Ophthalmology Department . He explains diagnosing severe dry eyes before surgery is difficult - but critical.

Rountree went to TLC for the surgery, and that's when he met Dr. Robert Lehmann for the first time-- the surgeon who would perform the procedure.

Reporter: "When was the first time you saw Dr. Lehmann?"
Rountree: "Two minutes before surgery." Reporter: "Did Dr. Lehmann even examine you?" Rountree: "Never."

A claim Dr. Lehmann denies. Dr. Lehmann declined to talk on camera and says he wasn't aware Rountree had a problem until we called him. He "believes he did a thorough examination" of Mr. Rountree and "did not have any clinical signs of severe dry eyes " before the operation.

According to TLC, the optometrist examines the patient so that surgeons like Dr. Lehmann can rely on that examination. TLC stated its protocol for surgeons to examine patients "depends on the surgeon"- but generally speaking TLC says a "surgeon does surgery" -- and pointed out Rountree signed an informed consent.

Rountree, meanwhile, has drops by every mirror in his home ...

"The drops I put in 30 seconds ago. My eyes are burning right now. The pain it never goes away -- 24 hours a day."

His eyes are so dry, they sometimes seal themselves shut at night. He even put an ad in the paper -- looking for people who had the same problem.

TLC's website says there is no guarantee with lasik -- and reminds patients to make their doctor aware of certain eye

problems - like severe dry eyes before surgery. If you are not asked or you are not certain, make sure you discuss these issues with your doctor. Also, if you go in for lasik, you may want to think about going to a doctor independent of the Lasik Center for an evaluation.

CBS 11

kb
