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One-third of laser eye patients experience night vision problems: study

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COLUMBUS, OHIO - Nearly a third of patients undergoing laser eye surgery, using the LASIK method, reported problems seeing at night, according to a new study.

Scientists at Ohio State University analysed data from 605 patients who had the surgery six months earlier. One out of three reported vision problems including seeing halos, starbursts and glare surrounding lights — problems that can affect a person's night vision.



INDEPTH: [The Fuzzy World of Laser Eye Surgery](#)

"Age seemed to predict who would and wouldn't be happy (with LASIK surgery) down the road," said the report.

The study suggests that those who have repeat surgery seem to be prone to more problems.

"Patients who had undergone the procedure again were generally less happy with the outcomes than those who had the surgery only once," said Melissa Bailey, co-author of the study.

Bailey presented her findings at the annual American Academy of Optometry meeting in Philadelphia.

LASIK used 95 per cent of the time

About 100,000 Canadians undergo laser eye surgery every year, costing \$1,000 to \$3,000.

The surgery is intended to correct disorders including myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness) and astigmatism (distorted vision).

The two most common procedures are called the PRK

EXTERNAL LINKS —

- Canadian Association of Optometrists
- American Optometric Association
- Consumer Reports on LASIK surgery
- Surgical Eye Care: What Patients Should Know

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(photorefractive keratectomy) and the LASIK (laser in situ Keratomileusis). LASIK is used 95 per cent of the time.

The LASIK technique is more complex. The surgeon uses a knife called a microkeratome to cut a flap of corneal tissue, removes the tissue beneath with a laser, then replaces the flap.

Bailey says it takes at least six months for the eyes to stabilize after surgery.

Despite the night vision problems, 97 per cent of patients in the study said they would recommend LASIK to a friend. Age was relevant as to who would recommend the surgery. Patients in their mid-40s and beyond were less likely to.



"Eyesight changes for most people when they hit their mid-40s," says Bailey. "They develop presbyopia, a form of farsightedness which usually means the person needs... reading glasses."

Bailey says LASIK doctors should note the corneal flatness of their patients. The flatter the corneas in the outset, the more likely the person was to experience starburst problems.

"We don't know if night vision problems continue indefinitely," says Bailey. "LASIK hasn't been around long enough or studied deeply enough."

Concerns are serious enough that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police advised its officers in 2000 not to get laser eye surgery.

However, many athletes, such as golfers Tiger Woods and Mike Weir, have gone through with it and say they are happy with the results.

What you should be asked prior to surgery

- ✍ Are you at least 18 years old?
- ✍ Have you had stable vision a year prior to surgery?
- ✍ Do you have diseases of the cornea or retina?
- ✍ Are you fully aware of the potential risks?
- ✍ Do you have a history of other eye health or general health problems?



SOURCE: Eye Health Council of Canada

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