

BILATERAL SIMULTANEOUS LASIK

LASIK is now so predictable and safe that most clinics around the world do surgery on both eyes on the same day. Our clinic also offers this service if you are a good candidate for surgery. If you prefer to have one eye done at a time, we will be happy to do it for you in this manner.

What are the arguments for and against having both eyes done at the same time?

Those against the idea of having both eyes done at the same time have the following reservations:

What if something goes wrong?

What about the risk of infection?

What happens if the result is unsatisfactory and now both eyes have been done?

What if something goes wrong?

LASIK is a safe and predictable procedure and in experienced hands there are very seldomly complications with the procedure. It would be untruthful to deny that anything could go wrong, but in the event that something did go wrong, we would not proceed to do the second eye until the first eye had completely rehabilitated. It is also important to note that when we refer to “things going wrong”, we do not imply serious complications at all, but rather minor complications that would delay the treatment for 6 to 12 weeks at the most. Treatment is then resumed again and the final outcome is rarely affected at all.

What about the risk of infection?

The risk of infection is very low. Neither of the two surgeons in the clinic have ever had a case of infection following LASIK. If an infection did develop with LASIK, the source of the infection is most probably going to be beneath the corneal flap and treatment would entail lifting the flap, washing out the source of infection and then applying antibiotic drops. Each patient is treated with antibiotic drops after the procedure anyway and this would explain why the risk of infection is so low.

What happens if the result is unsatisfactory and now both eyes have been done?

The procedure is extremely predictable and very few patients would have an unwanted result. Once the first eye has been operated, if all has gone well, we see no benefit in waiting days to months before the second eye is operated. The potential benefit is that once it is noted how the first eye responded to treatment, the second eye's treatment can be modified accordingly. There are a number of fundamental flaws in this argument. Firstly, to decide on the result of the first eye, one needs to wait about six weeks for the eye to settle down finally before the final refraction can be noted. Most people having the two eyes operated on different days, have anything from one day to a couple of weeks between treatment sessions.

Clearly, the readings are being based on the first eye's response, even though the first eye might still be changing and settling down. The second major flaw in this argument is that if indeed it was waited for six weeks before the second eye was treated, it is possible that the following scenario occurs: Imagine a patient with -6.00 in both eyes has treatment in both eyes on the same day and six weeks later the result is zero (perfect) on the right but -1.50 on the left. This is possible and does occur from time to time. Now the under corrected eye can simply be enhanced and the -1.50 treated. If this patient had been treated one eye at a time and the right eye had been treated first, the results would have been exactly the same. If the left eye was treated first, the result would have been seen to have given an under-correction and the right eye would have been programmed to receive a 25% bigger dose of laser. This would have resulted in an over-correction of the right eye to the order of $+1.25$ or thereabouts. Clearly it can be seen that this argument cannot hold its ground.

It should be noted that when we started doing LASIK more than 13 years ago, we also did one eye at a time, and when we achieved excellent results time after time, we decided to go ahead and do bilateral LASIK. The benefits to the patient were so significant, that Mr. Cummings has been doing bilateral simultaneous LASIK in more than 98% of cases since 1995 in South Africa. Almost all the LASIK surgeons in South Africa do bilateral simultaneous LASIK. Most of the top surgeons in the United States of America also do bilateral LASIK. The Wellington Ophthalmic Laser Clinic started doing bilateral LASIK surgery in February of 1998 with excellent results.

Surgeons who are highly experienced and skilled in the performing of LASIK worldwide offer bilateral LASIK to their patients.

It needs to be kept in mind that surgery is never done simultaneously – the one eye is done first, and then once the surgeon is satisfied that the procedure went perfectly well, and only then, is the second eye treated. The treatments are therefore given minutes apart rather than weeks apart.

The benefits of bilateral LASIK can be summarised as follows:

1. The visual recovery is faster and the eyes are balanced from day one.
2. The visual rehabilitation is quicker and there is no need to wear glasses with only one lens or one contact lens while waiting for the second eye to be treated.
3. Less time is spent away from the work place for recovery.
4. There are less follow-up visits and related expenses such as travel costs.
5. The anxiety of waiting for the second procedure to be done is eliminated.
6. The cost of medication is halved.

Remember that LASIK is an elective procedure and the final decision is yours. It is important to make the choice that **you** are comfortable with.