



MIND/BODY

Innovation Reduces Eye-Surgery Risks

Now there's a solution for farsighted people who want permanent vision correction without the possible side effects of LASIK surgery.

Conductive keratoplasty (CK), a new laser-free procedure approved by the FDA last April, is a better option for the 20 percent of Americans who are farsighted.

Here's why: Nearsighted folks have corneas that peak in the middle; with LASIK, doctors can reshape and correct them by removing tissue. Farsightedness, meanwhile, is characterized by flat corneas. In CK, a tiny probe the width of a human hair is inserted into several spots along the outer edge of the cornea, heating them and causing the transparent disk to constrict. "Imagine a half-dozen guys standing on the edges of a waterbed. Their weight makes the center of the bed mound up. With CK, the same thing happens to the cornea," says ophthalmologist Michael Aronsky, M.D., who performs CK at the Kremer Laser Eye Center in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. "When the center rises, light strikes the eye at a different angle, which corrects farsightedness."

With CK, farsighted patients are less likely to experience side effects that are common in LASIK, such as poor night vision, glare, blurriness, and dry eyes (a particular problem among menopausal women who go the laser route). These negatives have caused many people to avoid surgical correction because they didn't think their sight was bad enough to warrant the risks, says Edward Manche, M.D., assistant professor of ophthalmology and director of cornea and refractive surgery at Stanford University. "This procedure will open up the possibility of treatment to a lot more people."

Currently, CK is approved only to treat hyperopia, or farsightedness that is unrelated to age. However, current clinical trials may soon earn it approval as a treatment for presbyopia,

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the more common age-related farsightedness.

Recovery time is comparable to that of LASIK. "Most people can drive and return to work one to two days after surgery, but you might need glasses for a short while," Manche says. "However, most people get full CK benefits in two to three weeks." In about 1 percent of cases, people who have CK continue to need corrective lenses. The 15-minute procedure (including prep time) costs about \$1,000 to \$2,500 per eye and is covered by some insurance policies.

"CK won't replace glasses, contacts, or LASIK," Aronsky says. "But for many people with farsightedness, especially women, it's great -- and it's safe."

To find a physician who performs CK, check the Web site of the company that manufactures the equipment, [Refractec](#).

