

## **Laser Vision Correction: The Miracle of the 21st Century**

**Saving Your Sight, by Dr. Mark Sibley, MD, FACS  
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Jack Sibley, my father, got his first pair of eyeglasses in first grade. His glasses were as thick as coke bottles in every picture I have ever seen of him. Without his glasses he could not even see the lint in his navel. Today he sees 20/20 without glasses.

My brother, Paul Sibley, M.D., a surgeon, got his first eyeglasses in junior high. He graduated to contact lenses a year later. His vision was never clear, and his eyes were never comfortable and always irritated. His eyes would dry out on airplanes, and he feared losing a contact lens every time he went scuba diving. Today his vision also is 20/20 without glasses.

Both my father and brother used to joke about having to listen to people on the beach to know which way to swim to shore when they were in the ocean. They laugh about the "old days" when they could not find their own beach towel coming out of the water in Daytona Beach where we grew up. Now they sit around comparing who has the best vision and whose eyes are more "bionic." They laugh about the time they spent with "four eyes" instead of two.

Besides being father and son, what they have in common is that both of them decided to abandon their glasses (visual crutches) with a treatment called refractive surgery.

Millions of people could soon be free of their glasses thanks to refractive surgery. Vision correction with laser or R.K. has become very simple, safe and successful. The treatment can mean the end of cumbersome eye wear (glasses or contact lenses) for those with nearsightedness, farsightedness or astigmatism.

Over 60 million Americans could receive this treatment. I predict that refractive surgery will become the world's most common surgical procedure within two years.

This could be called the "eye laser miracle." We are finally reaching a point where people feel comfortable with the idea of having it done.

There are three ways to get clear vision: eyeglasses, contact lenses, or refractive treatment. Refractive treatment options have now increased. The three main procedures available are R.K., P.R.K. (excimer laser) and LASIK.

Option one includes R.K. Using a diamond scalpel; the surgeon makes a series of microscopic radial, spoke-like incisions. There is no laser involved. There is a high success rate, but this is limited to nearsightedness or astigmatism correction only. This has been successfully performed in the United States since 1978.

Option two is PRK (excimer laser). A computer-guided laser vaporizes tissue across the surface of the cornea. It is as if the contact lens prescription was being engraved on the surface of the eye instead of wearing a contact lens. This was approved by the FDA in 1995.

Option three is LASIK. The eye surgeon has to cut and lift the thin, protective flap. The computer-guided laser then vaporizes the tissue similar to PRK at this middle level and the flap is repositioned in place.

The PRK and the LASIK can treat farsightedness in addition to nearsightedness and

astigmatism. The FDA just approved this in July of 1999.

Laser vision correction/refractive surgery could free millions from their glasses. My father and brother were two of those patients. Fortunately, their results were 20/20 vision in both eyes. Each one says, "I am seeing better than ever before."

In coming weeks we will discuss other miracles that help restore vision and could prevent blindness. This may include a new treatment to help everyone over 40 to throw away their reading glasses when they get "old-sightedness," and their arms get "too short" to read without glasses.

A reminder: January is Eye Health Care Month. Stay tuned here for more important information about protecting your sight.

### Dr. Mark Sibley, MD, FACS



Dr. Mark Sibley has over 20 years of experience in the ever-evolving field of ophthalmology. He is a board-certified ophthalmologist, F.A.C.S., and he is highly trained to perform the advanced operations offered by the Florida Eye Center. He is medical advisor to the Society to Prevent Blindness and to the American Diabetes Association, and is team ophthalmologist for the Devil Rays.

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