



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BUREAU OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY  
2300 E STREET NW  
WASHINGTON DC 20372-5300

IN REPLY REFER TO  
**OCT 25 2006**

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, NAVY MEDICINE EAST  
COMMANDER, NAVY MEDICINE WEST  
COMMANDER, NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA  
COMMANDER, NAVY MEDICINE SUPPORT COMMAND

SUBJECT: Policy Guidance on LASIK

Reference: (a) NAVMED P-117, Manual of Medical Department  
(b) NAVADMIN 341/99 Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK) Surgery Program  
for Active Duty Service Members  
(c) BUMED WASHINGTON DC 061344Z APR 00 Corneal Refractive Surgery  
Physical Standards and Waiver

This memorandum provides guidance and establishes Navy Medicine policy and responsibilities for LASIK (laser-in-situ keratomileusis) surgery. LASIK is an acceptable surgical option for eligible Navy and Marine Corps personnel. This policy applies to active duty personnel and Reservists meeting selection criteria and receiving refractive surgery at military treatment facilities. It does not apply to new accessions.

Refractive Surgery and Service Members

Refractive surgery is a collection of vision correcting procedures, including LASIK. The Navy refractive surgery program is a critical medical program that has been shown to increase readiness, enhance operational performance and safety, and improve the retention of trained personnel. Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK) preceded LASIK as a common refractive surgery technique and also changes the refractive state of the eye by reshaping the cornea.

Although both LASIK and PRK are now available for active duty personnel, the primary advantage of LASIK over PRK is significantly faster visual recovery with a quicker return to full duty. The risk of loss of vision is the same after either procedure. Based on extensive Navy clinical trials, a wavefront guided procedure is the preferred laser treatment modality for either PRK or LASIK.

Eligible Personnel

All active duty personnel are eligible for LASIK unless specifically excluded. To be considered for LASIK, the service member must:

1. Submit a consult to an eye care provider
2. Obtain written approval from their command
3. Provide informed consent to refractive surgeon or designee
4. Meet Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines as candidate for the procedure

Return to Undersea Warfare special duty will follow guidance in Chapter 15, Articles 15 - 102, 105, and 106 of reference (a).

## Excluded Personnel

Unless otherwise approved by the Director of Aerospace Medicine, Naval aviation personnel who are required to fly as part of their duties (Class I and II) are excluded from LASIK. LASIK is permitted in those aviation personnel who are not required to fly (Class III). In addition, females who are pregnant, breast-feeding, or intend to become pregnant within 3 months following the procedure are ineligible for LASIK. Final decision regarding eligibility and medical appropriateness will be made by the surgeon and medical staff at the respective refractive surgery center.

The following is a list of specific LASIK exclusions:

- Concurrent topical or systemic medications which may impair healing, including corticosteroids, antimetabolites, isotretinoin (Accutane®), amiodarone hydrochloride (Cordarone®) and sumatriptan (Imitrex®)
- Medical condition(s) which may impair healing, including but not limited to: collagen vascular disease, autoimmune disease, and immunodeficiency diseases
- Active ophthalmic disease or significant crystalline lens opacity
- Evidence of glaucoma
- Evidence of keratoconus, corneal irregularity, or abnormal videokeratography in either eye
- Known sensitivity or inappropriate responsiveness to any of the medications used in the post operative course.

## Key Provisions of the Refractive Surgery Program:

- Access to Care: Service members seeking LASIK treatment shall use the same forms and procedures for requesting surgery, obtaining command approval and prioritization as for PRK, as described in reference (b).
- Prioritization of Treatment: With rare exception for the purpose of research at specified sites, all patients treated shall be active duty DOD personnel or Reservists as described below. Because the primary purpose of the program is readiness and performance enhancement, this procedure will not typically be offered to Service members who anticipate separation or retirement within the 12 months following the scheduled surgery date. Prioritization of warfighters for surgery is the responsibility of Line Commanders, as directed in reference (c).
- Reservists who are recalled or mobilized for extended periods of active duty may be eligible for this service, but must comply with all policies and procedures, including applicable wait times and the requirement for at least 12 months of active duty obligation following the proposed surgery date.

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