



THE TORIC LENS IMPLANT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Toric lens implants are an exciting technology for patients with moderate amounts of astigmatism. Reducing your astigmatism will reduce your dependence upon glasses as compared to if you had a standard lens implant. A standard lens implant can be set to make you either far sighted or near sighted but if you have astigmatism, your focus without glasses will still be blurred to some degree because of the residual astigmatism that is not corrected by the standard lens implant. You could wear glasses in order to correct the astigmatism, however if it is desirable to you to have better vision when you are not wearing your glasses, you may want to consider the toric lens implant.

What is astigmatism?

Astigmatism is a common condition that can make your vision distorted or blurred. The distortion is usually because the eye's cornea or lens has an oval instead of the preferred round shape.

Astigmatism is a very common eye condition and does not always require corrective lenses. Many people have some degree of astigmatism. Happily, a minor level of astigmatism is considered normal and requires no correction. If a person with a minor level of astigmatism needed cataract surgery a toric lens implant is not necessary.

Patients with moderate or high degrees of astigmatism almost always experience blurred or distorted vision unless the astigmatism is corrected. This is accomplished with corrective lenses (glasses or contact lenses) prior to cataract surgery. In some cases, patients do not realize they have astigmatism prior to cataract surgery because the cataract masks the astigmatism; but in this case, when the cataract is removed, it will become evident.

Will this technology eliminate the need for glasses?

Unfortunately, toric lens implants usually do not entirely eliminate eyeglasses. Most patients who have toric lens implants in both eyes will not have to wear glasses for distance activities but they would be expected to wear glasses for near. There is the option to set both eyes for near with the toric lens and wear glasses for distance or even one eye for distance and one eye for near (monovision).

Will I be guaranteed not to have any astigmatism if I receive the toric lens?

Correction of astigmatism is not an exact science but both toric lens implants and limbal relaxing incisions have been shown to be effective in significantly reducing astigmatism. Rarely, there is more or less effect depending on individual patient factors.

Does insurance cover the premium cost to upgrade to a toric lens?

Unfortunately it will not. Health insurance – whether a PPO, HMO, or Medicare - covers a cataract operation with a standard lens implant when the cataract is bad enough to be considered “medically necessary”. The additional fee to upgrade the lens implant to a toric lens is not covered, because the added convenience of reducing your dependence on eyeglasses is not considered



“medically necessary”. We ask that you pay this premium out-of-pocket fee in advance, because we will be ordering the toric lens implant in your specific power for you.

Are there any other options for correction of astigmatism?

Small amounts of astigmatism can be treated at the time of cataract surgery using limbal relaxing incisions (LRIs), which involve making small incisions in the cornea. This is a somewhat less expensive way of correcting astigmatism but is not as reliable for larger amounts of astigmatism.

LASIK surgery can also be utilized to correct astigmatism but is significantly more expensive and is an additional procedure that cannot be performed at the same time as cataract surgery and carries additional risks, while the toric lens implant is placed in the course of the cataract surgery and carries almost no additional risk.

What do you recommend I do?

Like cosmetic surgery, taking extra steps to reduce spectacle dependence is a discretionary and personal decision. Because this does not involve health advice or medical needs, the ultimate decision is yours. Start by evaluating how strong your desire is to see as clearly as possible when you aren't wearing your glasses. Every individual will value such convenience quite differently. My role, as your ophthalmologist, is to explain your options to you.

Summary

If you are a patient with cataracts, you are considering surgery because your cataracts prevent you from seeing well with your corrective eyeglasses. After cataract surgery you should be able to see well for both far and near distances with your new eyeglasses (assuming no other eye health problems). The decision about which type of artificial lens implant to have will only affect your ability to see without eyeglasses following cataract surgery. With both standard and multifocal lens implants, most people will see reasonably well in the distance without any eyeglasses. However, multifocal lens implants will provide the added convenience of being able to read many things without glasses.

No current technology can eliminate glasses, and how well you will perform with multifocal lens implants can vary because of individual factors. Nevertheless, they are an excellent option for patients who already need cataract surgery who want to decrease their reliance upon glasses. While multifocal implants carry no guarantees, they should greatly improve the odds that you will be able to read and see better overall without glasses.

Please inquire for more about your eligibility and the cost if you are interested in this technology!