

# ***Some Sailors, Marines Get Vision-Correcting Surgery***

Some active-duty Sailors and Marines are getting a special benefit to help them shed their spectacles and see better while they work.

Vision-correcting Photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) and laser in-situ keratomileusis (LASIK) is now being offered at three Navy military treatment facilities, with additional facilities getting the capability next year.

While the surgeries have definite quality-of-life implications, Navy Medicine decided to offer it to active-duty military members for readiness reasons.

PRK and LASIK are corneal refractive procedures, which means they change the shape of the cornea to correct vision flaws. The surgeries can help people with myopia (near sightedness), hyperopia (far sightedness) and some types of astigmatism.

LASIK generally offers a decreased recovery time and less discomfort, however it is technically more demanding to perform. The visual improvement remains stable over time for most people with both procedures.

As with any medical procedure, there can be side effects and complications associated with the surgery, including decreased night vision, glare sensitivity or worsening of the best pre-operation vision due to scar formation. At this time, only active-duty personnel are eligible for PRK and LASIK services at Navy MTFs. It's not likely that family members or retirees will be offered the surgeries soon, nor is it an authorized TRICARE benefit.

Since there's a high demand for the surgeries, Navy Medicine has established criteria for who can receive it. Highest priority is extended to those whose military duties require them to routinely work in extreme physical environments that precludes the safe use of glasses or contact lenses. This includes individuals working in aviation, SEALs and deployed Marines.

It must also be approved by an individual's chain of command.



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