

LATE RK RETREATMENT INFORMATION

It is important that our patients understand the theory behind our policy on retreatments, enhancements, re-operations, etc., on our previous RK patients, especially those who have been happy with their vision for many years but are now starting to notice a change in their vision. For those patients experiencing this, first let's review the facts:

- Since our period for performing RK ranges between 1984 and 1995, most of our RK patients are significantly older than when they underwent their procedure. As we all go through a process called Presbyopia, or “ageing vision”, starting in our early 40’s, if your most notable issue is your near vision and your distance has remained good, then this is part of a natural process. Reading glasses are still the answer to this development. If, on the other hand, your distance vision has deteriorated, then you may have slipped back into a degree of nearsightedness, or more uncommonly, you may have become farsighted, which can effect both your distance and near vision. In these cases, an eye exam will determine the difference. This is a good starting place and you can always forward that information to us here at Hale Vision and we will glad to comment on the findings and discuss the situation.
- In addition to these distance and near issues, some RK patients notice what we will call “fluctuations”. These patients notice that their vision will change from the early morning hours to the late in the day hours essentially every day, and in a discernable pattern, worse in the morning improving across the day, or the opposite. In these cases, it may be necessary to check the vision both in the early AM and the later afternoon to detect this variation as it is imperative that we understand this before planning any sort of treatment approach.
- After laser vision correction was approved in the mid 1990’s, attempts were made to use this new technology to enhance the previous RK patients. However, there were two issues that developed that influenced our position on these treatments. First, in the case of Lasik over RK, it became apparent that this was a one time treatment. No further enhancing could be done and there was always the possibility that creating a flap over previous incisions could result in the previous RK incisions re-opening again which could lead to other complications. The second approach to the issue was performing PRK or surface laser vision correction over the previous RK incisions. This was immediately ruled out as the patients developed a healing reaction known as cornea “haze” which is a form of scarring that can diminish the vision.
- Due to the issues described above, we entered a period of time in which the best approach was no approach at all and patients were advised to wait until some safer, more predictable procedure became available. Some things have changed over the past 10 years. While Lasik over RK is still not considered a good option, there have been improvements on the surface laser approach. As the lasers themselves evolved, the smoothness of their ablation patterns on the surface of the cornea improved, leading to less roughness and less formation of haze. Also, the use of a chemical known as Mitomycin C became popular. This substance reduced the tendency to develop the problematic haze by inhibiting the reactive cells in the cornea. While this chemical is widely used in surface laser treatments today, it has only a 10-15 year history and is a quite powerful drug that must be

used properly. Surface laser treatments, whether over old RK or Lasik, are much slower to heal and it can take a week to regain useful vision and months to reach your final result. Surface laser treatments can also cause significant discomfort and commonly require the patient to be off work for a week or so, between this discomfort and the early blurred vision. So, while this is in no way a “quick fix”, it is the most commonly used treatment today in these cases.

- Another potential possibility is that in patients over 50 and certainly over 60, a cataract could be developing in which case in the course of addressing the cataract we can try to resolve any other underlying vision issue.

So where do we stand today? The approach should be as follows: 1) If you are over 40 with good to adequate distance vision and reading is the biggest problem, then reading glasses are the probable answer. If you are ready to consider internal lens surgery to change the overall focus of your eye, then there are surgeries that can try to restore some reading as well as distance vision but in the case of previous RK patients, these procedures are limited and are improving by the year; 2) If your distance vision has deteriorated then it is essential to determine whether you are now nearsighted or farsighted. This will require an examination which can be performed by your current eye doctor. Following this examination, call us and have the information sent to our office for review. After some analysis we can then give you a more accurate opinion of the options that are, or are not, available to you at this time.

At Hale Vision it is our strong desire to help our patients achieve and retain good vision throughout their lifetime, we must, at all times, be aware of the risks involved in all the procedures that we perform in fulfilling that goal. New techniques and technologies are constantly under investigation and we are diligently watching for safer and smarter ways to help our patients at all times. We encourage those that are in the situation where they would like to have their vision enhanced but aren't sure they are comfortable with the current technologic options, to call us periodically to see if anything new is available. We try to keep track for all of our patients that are awaiting technologic changes, whether retreatment related or for initial surgical options, and will always try to notify those that we have for which valuable information has surfaced. You are welcomed to check with the office periodically and see if there has been any change in a surgical option that might prove beneficial to you.

