



Q&A with Dr. Mihir Parikh

Dr. Mihir (Max) Parikh, M.D. is board-certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology and has completed two fellowships in cornea, refractive, and anterior segment surgery. He is the San Diego Chargers Official Team Ophthalmologist, LASIK Surgeon and is responsible for all their eye-care needs.



What are common problems athletes have regarding their eyes?

Players typically just want to see better or more clearly. Whether that's through laser eye surgery or contacts, they just want to improve their vision. The goal is to allow them to see as well as they possibly can.

More athletes are having the LASIK procedure, including several Chargers players. Which players have you performed the surgery on and how have they benefited?

I've performed this surgery on a number of current and former players, coaches and their families. Some of the more recent Chargers are Kassim Osgood, Quentin Jammer, Scott Mruzckowski and Coach Steve Crosby, in addition, former Chargers include Ben Leber, Zeke Marino and Coach Tim Brewster to name a few. For the players, when the ball is in the air and they try to pick it up, the contact rotates. That split second could be the difference between making a good or great play... a reception, broken up pass, or interception. The LASIK procedure allows them to play without contacts and play with an advantage over players who wear them.

Did any of the players have any concerns prior to the surgery? What were they?

The players have the same concerns as you and I. How well will I see after LASIK? Is it safe? Does it hurt? Am I a good candidate? And, how long do I need to recover? These are all great questions that we answer in detail, after the patient is examined at our office as part of their free LASIK consultation. I would say the biggest concern for the players is loss of playing time and recovery needed. I usually tell players they won't be able to resume field or gym training for at least seven days.

How long have you been performing the LASIK procedure and what advances have you seen in that time?

I performed my first laser surgery in 1999, and have successfully treated about 10,000 eyes since. Advancements in custom imaging technology, such as Wavefront LASIK, has increased the number of patients getting 20/20 or better vision after surgery with increased clarity. These advancements, along with all-laser LASIK technology, allow us to perform laser correction on a wider range of prescriptions and get better visual results. This gets us happier surgical patients and increased patient satisfaction.

Talk about the "halo" effect and what starbursts are and what an athlete can do to improve these conditions.

Starbursts and the "halo" effect are what I call "night vision aberrations," which is like looking out of a dirty windshield. The clarity is decreased due to small impurities in your field of vision. This happens in only 5-8% of all patients, but the Wavefront LASIK procedure minimizes the effect. A player can also wear an anti-reflective visor for added protection.

Would you recommend the LASIK surgery to high school athletes or younger athletes?

I don't recommend the procedure to anyone under the age of 18 because their vision can still be changing. College athletes with stable vision looking to play at a higher level are potential candidates. Laser vision correction surgery is performance enhancing; it can give an athlete a competitive edge.

In football, face shields are becoming increasingly popular. Do face shields help an athlete who has had LASIK surgery?

With or without LASIK, face shields are good because they can minimize or prevent direct hits to the eye. In my professional opinion, all players need to protect their eyes, especially those players with contacts. Tinted shields can help with other problems such light sensitivity and helps a player see better under certain playing conditions.

Are there any conditions in which you would not perform LASIK on a patient?

Yes, patients with changing vision year after year should not have LASIK until their vision is stable. Waiting for their vision to stabilize can avoid a secondary LASIK treatment in the future. Patients with other eye conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts and retina issues are often not LASIK candidates either. To ensure patients are LASIK candidates, we perform several preliminary eye exams and diagnostic tests prior to any surgical procedure.

What makes an ideal candidate for the LASIK procedure and how would a non-athlete benefit?

Anyone who doesn't want to wear glasses or contact anymore, or someone wanting to reduce their dependence on them. The first step is a complete eye exam and advanced vision testing by a cornea specialist to determine if the LASIK procedure is right for them. Anyone who works in an environment where contacts are disadvantageous should consider laser vision correction. I've treated a lot of people in the fire department, police department, military, athletes, and those who participate in recreational sports like swimming or surfing.

If you would like more information about the LASIK procedure or how Dr. Parikh can help correct your vision, contact Advanced Ophthalmology Institute toll free at 1-877-484-2020 to speak with a counselor who will be happy to schedule your private consultation. You can also visit their website at www.neweyes.com.