



Article from independent Laser Eye Correction website www.lasik-eyes.co.uk

A WORD ABOUT PRICE

"From £395.00 per eye", "4 eyes for Two", "Limited Time offers", auctions on eBay and so forth, Laser Vision correction has become commoditised - or has it ???

We at Lasik-eyes, in keeping with our mission to provide the public with information about Clinics, surgeons and technology to enable you the potential patient to make an INFORMED decision, have decided to lay out the bare facts about price. We have been asked often about prices and why there is so much variation. We also learn of those who have been subject to serious upselling and others who have indicated a level of misrepresentation by "Lasik-eyes" in advertising prices that are not correct.

At risk of antagonising our advertisers we at "Lasik eyes" in the future shall be asking providers to indicate the RANGE of pricing and for the previous 12 months the MEAN pricing and MEDIAN (most common price). This we believe will be a more honest representation of the facts.

Now to get on with some hard facts about pricing and what is going on out there!

Best to start off with the topic of ethics and code of practice. The General Medical Council's latest "Good Medical Practice" issued 13th November 2006 to which all doctors are meant to adhere: Item 60 states:

"If you publish medical information about your medical services, you must make sure the information is factual and verifiable."

Unfortunately institutions are not bound by the same code of practice. This is because institutions and organizations are unable to and not compelled to register with the General Medical Council although they provide medical care. The same is not true of the General Optical Council where both individuals and organizations have to register. As a result organizations are in a sense "unregulated" by the General Medical Council but are regulated by the Healthcare Commission. The organisations cannot therefore be held to the same standards that an individual doctor might. So please bear this in mind in case you think that laser clinics are regulated and expected to follow a standard of conduct.

Why is there so much variation in terms of pricing?

In a nutshell "You get what you pay for..." Yes there is a level of variation out there but beware , and here are some issues to consider...

"Up selling" or "Bait and Switch". Prices for Laser vision correction are often advertised to look really affordable - almost for the same price as contact lenses e.g. from £395.00 per eye. The reality is that very few if any receive laser vision correction for that price. To be eligible you probably have to have a prescription that is not worth treating! Once you have made the call and have been enticed, in no time you will be informed that the low offer is not available for your prescription and that a higher priced procedure is necessary. Also to get the best treatment such as a customised treatment, you will need to pay an even higher price and furthermore with Intralasek - a far safer procedure you will have to pay even more.... Before you know it you could be spending up to £1800 to £2000 per eye! You might have a few questions such as how do I know Customised treatments are better for me? Or if Intralasek is safer then why is a blade being used at all? These are questions that you need to research and our advice is to check the market out and see what different organisations have to say. In other words get "second opinions". Several organizations are upfront and do not discriminate in terms of level of correction and do not "up sell" or "Bait and Switch". They are typically smaller and less commercial. Take your choice...

Technology The reality is that for an organization to keep up to date with technology, they will have to change over or upgrade technology every 2 to 3 years. This is expensive and the cost is passed on

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to the patient. Wavefront treatment and Intralasek make use of expensive technology and there is no practical way that this can be provided at rock bottom prices. Check out the technology that is going to be used on you and independently evaluate whether it is current. There are centres in the UK that are using technology that does work but might be a little dated.

Expertise Yes like car mechanics, there is a variety of ability out there. Surgeons vary in terms of skill and those that are good are likely to be more expensive. You are paying for both technology (good surgeons typically seek out what they believe is best for their patients) and their expertise. Although laser vision correction in most cases works out well, on the rare occasion things do go wrong - even in the best hands. What definitely separates out the men from the boys is the ability to deal with a problem appropriately if it does occur so that you the patient do not suffer an adverse outcome. Typically those surgeons who are higher priced are ones who are Fellowship trained in Cornea and Refractive Surgery and practice these specialities daily and often in the National Health Service. Fellowship training for those of you who are not aware, is a period of highly specialised apprenticeship, usually quite rigorous which leads to a high level of expert knowledge and confidence in the area of speciality. Laser vision correction involves the Cornea, so those with expertise in this area are theoretically more knowledgeable.

Patient Care Pathway. To save costs and increase efficiency, many centres, in particular the very large commercial groups make use of optometrists and opticians to perform screening for suitability. The surgeon does not see the patient except on the day of surgery and acts basically as a technician. The costs to provide care are thus lower and reflected in terms of pricing. Is this model wrong? Well far be it for us to be judgemental, but this is EYE SURGERY. For such an important decision, many would want to meet and get to know the surgeon and develop a rapport and relationship. Furthermore, having the surgeon meet and examine you without the pressure of rushing to operate on the next patient does provide an opportunity to pick up any problems. Sometimes contraindications are subtle and can only be reliably picked up by medical practitioners who have the appropriate experience and clinical training. The majority of problems from laser eye surgery are a result of inappropriate selection and often from lack of understanding or lack of complete evaluation. The Royal College of Ophthalmologists feels it is important for the treating surgeon to see the patient in advance of surgery and have indicated this in their "Standards". (see reference and link below).

Finance / Easy Payment Plans. Good laser vision correction surgery in the right hands with the best technology is not inexpensive and can be hard to afford. Finance plans are an excellent way of spreading payments and several centres do offer interest free options. Unlike laser vision correction, you can be reassured, this area of finance is regulated by the Financial Services Authority

OUR ADVICE

-  Take price inducements as just that along with a pinch of salt.
-  Visit several centres and choose one that you are most comfortable with ensuring that you are getting the level of technology and expertise you are seeking and comfortable with.
-  Make sure you know who your surgeon is and try to ensure you meet him in advance of your operation
-  Use Easy payment plans if they make it easier for you to afford good surgery.
-  Don't compromise - your eyes are valuable and "priceless"...