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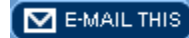
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Help for aging eyes approved

Irvine company green-lighted by FDA to market a nonsurgical, nonlaser way to fix age-related farsightedness.

By MAYRAV SAAR
 The Orange County Register

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Tired of buying magnifying glasses at Rite Aid?

An Irvine-based company announced Monday that it has received Food and Drug Administration approval to market a nonlaser, nonsurgical procedure for correcting presbyopia, the age-related farsightedness that will cause an estimated 90 million people to reach for dime-store granny glasses in the next 10 years, local doctors said.

Conductive Keratoplasty, developed by Refractec Inc. of Irvine, uses radio waves to slightly heat and reshape the cornea. Within one year, 93 percent of patients who receive the surgery do not need glasses, company officials said. The FDA approved Conductive Keratoplasty, or CK, in 2002 for hyperopia, another form of age-related farsightedness that affects about 60 million people and has a different effect on the eye's ability to focus.

Because presbyopia affects everyone to some degree after the age of 40, doctors are heralding CK as "indispensable," said Fullerton ophthalmologist Dr. Robert Lingua, 55, who performs CK and had it done on both eyes.

The procedure corrects problems of the inner lens, which helps focus on things that are up close, like this newspaper. Surgical procedures to replace the inner lens or inject the eye with gel are being tested to correct presbyopia, but Refractec said CK is the only procedure that affects the inner lens without actually touching it. Instead, all the reshaping is done on the cornea.

Lingua said his aging Lasik patients are now coming back to correct their farsightedness with CK: "They're coming back to say, 'We've enjoyed eyeglass-free vision, can you bring us back?'"

The company said CK has minimal side effects, but past patient Beverly Ingram has noticed a profound one: She's spending far more attention and money on her appearance than she has in years.

Ingram, 56, of Fullerton, became farsighted after giving birth to her son 18 years ago. The problem became so bad that Ingram couldn't focus in the mirror to pluck her eyebrows or apply eyeliner. So she stuck her hair in a bun, hid behind her "matronly" glasses and, she said, "felt frumpy."

"I am one of those people who loses things, so I wore my reading glasses on a chain around my neck. It got caught in my jewelry, caught in my scarves," she said. She finally learned to compensate by buying multiple pairs and stashing them wherever she might need them.

Last year she attended a seminar by Lingua and signed up for the surgery the following week. The procedure, which cost about \$1,800 for one eye, was painless and took about five minutes, she said. She was able to grab a scrap paper or receipt out of her purse and read it without her glasses for the first time.

Then the real transformation occurred.



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"I had a makeup makeover, and I went shopping," she said. "It made me feel younger."

Ingram also got her hair styled and has lost 6 pounds - all of which she credits to her new sight.

"I thought, 'If I can see now, I might as well get in shape the rest of the way.' "

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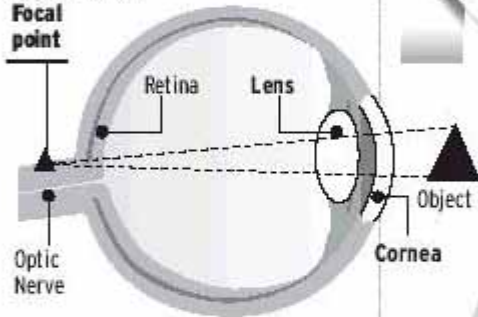
Freedom Communications, Inc.

Reshaping the cornea

An Irvine firm has found a way to correct age-related farsightedness, or presbyopia, without using a laser.

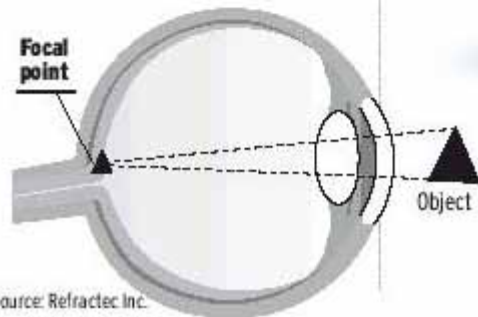
Before surgery

Presbyopia is a progressive condition that causes near vision to fade with age. Farsighted patients have trouble seeing up close because images are focused behind the retina.



After surgery

The procedure uses the controlled release of radio frequency energy, instead of a laser or scalpel, to reshape the cornea and improve near vision.

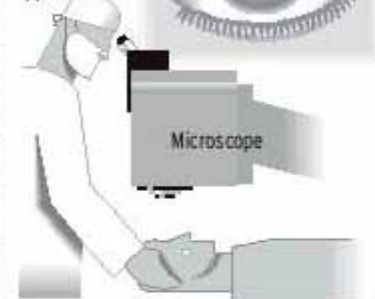


Source: Refractive Inc.

The procedure is performed

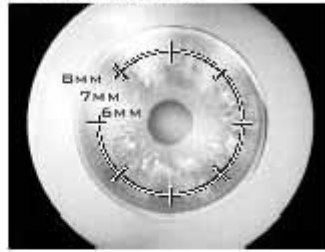
1 Anesthesia

Topical or "eyedrop" anesthesia applied.



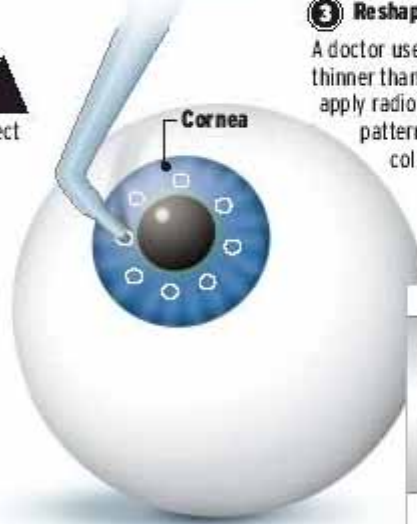
2 Creating a template

A circular treatment pattern is imprinted on the cornea using rinse-away ink to guide the doctor's treatment.



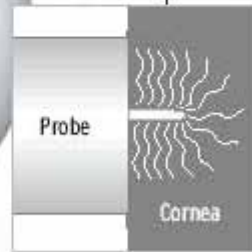
3 Reshape the cornea

A doctor uses a radio frequency probe thinner than a strand of human hair to apply radio waves in a circular pattern, shrinking small areas of collagen in the cornea.



Side view

Radio energy heats, reshapes cornea



4 Changing the curve

The circular treatment pattern acts like a belt tightening around the cornea, increasing its overall curvature to improve near vision.



The Register