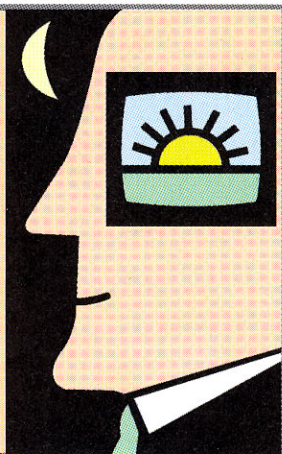


# Medical Breakthroughs For Aging Eyes

Neil F. Martin, MD  
American Academy of Ophthalmology



As we age, our vision can be affected by a number of conditions, including cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetes-related eye damage as well as presbyopia (age-related farsightedness) and insufficient tear production (dry eyes). Catching and treating these problems early is the key to preventing long-term vision loss.

## NEW EYE TREATMENTS

A number of new drugs and lens technologies are making it much easier to treat a variety of age-related eye ailments. The following treatments have become available just within the last several years...

• **Restasis eyedrops for dry eyes.** The drug *cyclosporine A* (Restasis), used to prevent rejection in heart and kidney transplants, also relieves tear-deficiency syndrome (dry eyes) when used as eyedrops by decreasing inflammation in the tear glands. The drops are applied twice a day to increase tear production. Some people may experience slight stinging at first. Anyone with an active eye infection (such as conjunctivitis) shouldn't use the drops.

• **Improved glaucoma treatments.** A new eyedrop medication, *latanoprost* (Xalatan), reduces fluid buildup better than older eyedrops. (Glaucoma eyedrop treatments work by enhancing the eye's natural

filtering process.) While very safe, *latanoprost* can cause occasional redness, tends to make eyelashes grow longer and may turn light-colored irises brown over time.

Other new treatments include selective laser trabeculoplasty (SLT), which uses a cool laser to enhance the eye's natural drainage canal and improve flow out of the eye without invasive surgery. SLT uses less energy than its predecessor, argon laser trabeculoplasty, lowering the risk of damaging surrounding tissue. SLT is so effective and safe that it may even become a first-line treatment for glaucoma, in place of eyedrops.

• **Eyeglasses with progressive lenses.** Progressive lenses are made by a computer to "morph" from one lens setting in the upper half of the eyeglasses (for far objects) into another in the lower half (for close objects). Progressive lenses have been around awhile, but the newest ones are a vast improvement over what was available just a few years ago. *Reason:* Advanced computer designs allow a smoother transition from far to near.

• **Improved Lasik.** Lasik sur-

*Bottom Line/Retirement* interviewed Neil F. Martin, MD, FACS, an ophthalmologist in private practice in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and a clinical correspondent for the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

