

The Golden Years Bring Golden Vision Opportunities

Millions of older Americans are busy redefining what being a senior citizen means. From continuing to work, to volunteering, to traveling, staying active seems to be a central theme among today's older generation. And, staying on top of chances to improve age-related and other vision problems can help in the pursuit of active longevity.

Barry Aronsen, O.D., is an eye doctor in Akron, Ohio. He saw first-hand what a difference improved vision made for an older patient of his. At the age of 66, his patient Manny decided to get laser vision correction. Wanting to travel and get the most out of retirement, Manny was tired of the hassle of his nearsightedness.

Now 72, Manny has enjoyed the last few years of the clear vision his LASIK surgery has given him. "Manny's been going stronger than ever since the procedure," Dr. Aronsen says. "He's extremely active at age 72 — and most of the time he doesn't even wear glasses!

"More and more people in their early- to mid-60s are benefiting from this proven technology," he says. "The procedure usually takes less than a half hour. In my experience, most of the seniors who've been through it are pleased with the results."

LASIK is the vision treatment of choice for a growing number of people, but it isn't the ticket for all seniors. But, a lot of other new and improved products are out there that can do the trick and help provide happier and more active golden years. Here's a few of them.

- **Extended-wear soft contact lenses:** New oxygen-rich lenses make for more comfortable extended wear – up to a whole month. Say goodbye to most lens hassles. The trick is in the additional oxygen the lenses allow through to the delicate cornea – it helps prevent germs from causing infections under the contacts.
- **Bifocal contact lenses:** More and more seniors are opting for bifocal contact lenses over their old glasses. A simple shift of the gaze is all it takes to switch from near to distant vision.
- **Progressive lenses:** A product that combines easier vision and good looks, progressive lenses are also sometimes called "no-line bifocals." Wearers enjoy more seamless transitions between near, in-between and far vision. Plus, forget the old-fashioned bifocal look.
- **Dietary supplements:** Good food choices and dietary supplements may slow the onset and development of age-related vision woes like cataracts and macular degeneration. Look for things high in antioxidant vitamins A, E and C.

"At your annual eye exam, make sure you talk to your doctor about the options best suited to your lifestyle," says Dr. Aronson.