

# Seeing Clearly

**Implantable contact lenses: A vision correction alternative to LASIK.**

For most of her life, Jessica Page woke up to a blurry world. The first order of the day was always reaching for her glasses. “I’m super-blind, and I’ve needed glasses or contacts since I was eight,” she explains. “I was always reaching in the morning, trying to find my glasses and trying to find the alarm clock.”

Because Jessica had severe *myopia*, or nearsightedness, she couldn’t see anything clearly beyond a few inches without wearing glasses or contacts. But even though she relied on them, glasses and contacts often got in her way.

“I’m very active and go to the beach or on the boat while wearing contacts, with the dirt flying around, and the sand and the water – it’s just a real pain,” describes Jessica, who is 31.

Often planted in front of a computer, Jessica is an IT specialist. Heavy computer use can contribute to dry eyes, and she reached a point where contacts became uncomfortable.

“My eyes would get so, so dry,” she recalls. She switched to glasses to avoid the discomfort her contacts were causing. The change helped at work, but was less than ideal for the off-hour hobbies she loved, like horseback riding.

“Having to wear glasses when horseback riding is one of the most miserable things possible,” states Jessica. “It can get sweaty, and you’re constantly pushing your glasses back up on your face.”

She dreamed of glasses-free vision but decided not to pursue LASIK, the most well known refractive eye surgery. LASIK is performed with a laser to physically alter the cornea, the front “window” of the eye, to change how the eye focuses. It is used to treat nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism.

“I’d been looking into vision correction for years, but I was never very comfortable with the idea of LASIK surgery,” confides Jessica.

“LASIK is a great option for some people, but I was worried about having dry eyes afterward since I’m on the computer all the time,” she continues. “It’s also a permanent procedure that reshapes your corneas, and I didn’t want that.”

In her research, Jessica discovered

an alternative to LASIK that could give her clear, sharp vision without the need for any permanent physical changes to her corneas. She opted for *implantable contact lenses*, or *ICLs*.

“Once I learned about ICLs, I knew that was the best choice for me,” she affirms.



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Jessica turned to board-certified, fellowship-trained, ophthalmologist Jason K. Darlington, MD, at The Eye Institute for Medicine & Surgery for the ICL procedure.

## Outpatient setting

Implantable contact lenses are similar to cataract surgery in that they are a relatively quick, outpatient procedure and that they involve placing a lens inside of the patient’s eye. Unlike cataract surgery, however, the eye’s natural lens isn’t removed. The ICL works with the natural lens to improve vision.

An ICL is an *intraocular lens*, which is a synthetic lens of a precise power manufactured for insertion within the eye. The ICL is made of *Collamer*®, a special material containing a small amount of purified collagen.

“For this surgery, we do both eyes at the same time,” explains Dr. Darlington, who performs the procedure at The Eye Institute’s outpatient surgery center.

“A micro-incision is created, and the contact lens is implanted in the eye by tucking it under the iris and in front of the natural lens,” he describes.

Part of what attracted Jessica is that the procedure is reversible. ICLs can

remain in the eyes indefinitely. However, if another eye condition develops, they can be removed if necessary, or replaced with another lens in the event a prescription changes dramatically.

“If the patient develops a cataract fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years down the road or needs other eye surgery, ICLs can be taken out by an eye surgeon,” assures Dr. Darlington.

For patients who can’t have LASIK or other refractive surgery, ICLs can help in achieving a glasses-free lifestyle.

“LASIK isn’t an option for patients who are extremely nearsighted or have thin corneas or slightly irregular corneas. However, they can have their vision surgically corrected through ICLs,” educates Dr. Darlington. Other contraindications for LASIK are chronically dry eyes, he says, which can be exacerbated by LASIK surgery.

“ICLs can be used for patients who are LASIK candidates but don’t want their eye altered by corneal refractive surgery because of the possibility of developing a large amount of dry eye,” he continues. “Some patients don’t like the idea of having their cornea changed. They’d rather have a lens implanted that can be taken out, instead of making a permanent change to their eye.”

Dr. Darlington notes that for people who are very nearsighted, ICLs may have an additional advantage. Glare at night, such as from oncoming cars when driving, or seeing halos around lights can occur for people with severe nearsightedness while wearing glasses or, in some cases, contacts.

“That glare and the halo effect tend to be minimized with the ICL treatment,” the surgeon adds. “ICLs can be an excellent treatment for nearsightedness.”

## Better than 20/20

Jessica reports that the ICL procedure was easy and highly effective.

“Dr. Darlington was fantastic,” reports Jessica. “He explained every step of the way and took fantastic care of me postoperatively. The people in the surgery center were so great. They made me feel very comfortable.”

“The surgery itself was a quick in-and-out and a pretty easy recovery,” she



Jessica loves her new glasses-free lifestyle.

emphasizes. “I could see without glasses when I came out of surgery.”

As her eyes healed, her vision became even sharper, and is now better than 20/20.

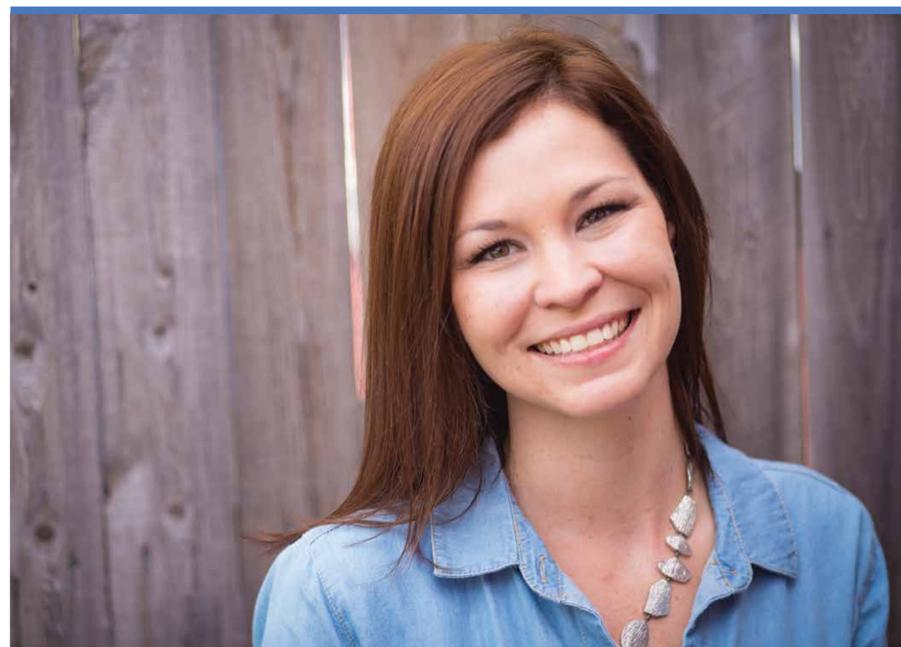
“ICLs gave me a much better chance for excellent results. I’ve got awesome vision that I’ll have for years and years without any maintenance. It’s basically like putting in a contact lens once and I’m done,” enthuses Jessica.

“It’s crazy to be able to wake up in the morning and see right away. It’s the most amazing thing ever,” she confirms. “This is how the rest of the world gets to live all the time, and I’m so thankful that I get to experience it, too.”

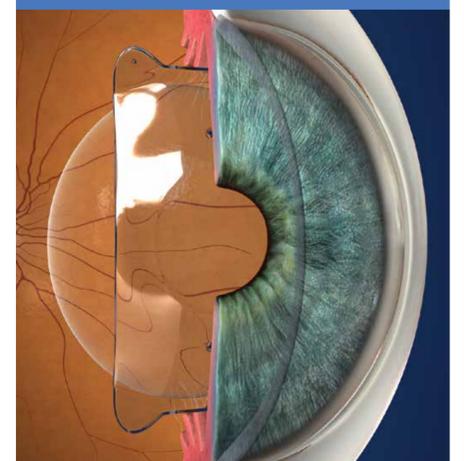
“I’d tell people to do the research and talk to a doctor to find out if ICLs are right for them,” continues Jessica, “because it definitely does offer advantages. LASIK is a great procedure in itself, but this is the Cadillac of vision. I’m pretty excited about it!” *FHCN article by Susan Hemmingway. Photos by Nerissa Johnson.*

## Comprehensive eye evaluations

When it comes to your eyesight, only the best will do. To schedule a comprehensive eye examination with one of the specialists at The Eye Institute for Medicine & Surgery, please call (321) 722-4443. There are three offices to serve you: 1995 W. NASA Blvd. in Melbourne, 150 S. Woods Drive in Rockledge and 5055 Babcock Street NE in Palm Bay.



**Jason K. Darlington, MD**, graduated with highest honors from the University of California Davis. He attended UC Davis Medical School, followed by an internship at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego. He completed his residency in ophthalmology at UC Davis. His fellowship in cornea diseases, transplants, cataract surgery and other advanced anterior segment surgery, glaucoma management and surgery, and LASIK and refractive surgery was completed at the prestigious Phillips Eye Institute in Minneapolis under the direction of Thomas Samuelson, MD, and Richard Lindstrom, MD. Dr. Darlington is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology, and he joined the staff at The Eye Institute for Medicine & Surgery in January 2015 after nine years of private practice in the Los Angeles area.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Darlington for an ICL or refractive surgery consultation at The Eye Institute for Medicine & Surgery, please call (321) 722-4443 or visit [www.SeeBetterBrevard.com](http://www.SeeBetterBrevard.com). Appointments are available in his Rockledge, Melbourne and Palm Bay offices.