

ALI'S EYE SURGERY DIARY



I couldn't wear my contact lenses for two weeks before my first consultation, so make sure you don't go during the party season!



On the day of the surgery, I arrived at the hospital without any make-up on. And for three days before, I couldn't wear mascara or eyeliner.



The actual operation only took 10 minutes and wasn't painful at all – even better, I could see perfectly immediately afterwards.



Walking out of the operation room without wearing my glasses was amazing – can I have it registered as a miracle?

I had suffered from bad eyesight since I was 11, and even though I'd also worn contact lenses since the age of 16, a lot of the time I still had to rely on glasses. My sight was so poor that I couldn't even get up and go to the bathroom in the morning without reaching for my specs.

Some people actually suit glasses, but I wasn't one of them. Every time I wore them, I felt like I looked a mess. For years, contact lenses were a lifesaver, but at the end of a long day my eyes were often tired and I'd have to have my glasses stashed in my handbag. And after a decade of wearing contact lenses, I was being plagued by eye infections.

Going on holiday was always a nightmare, too. Wearing contact lenses all day on the beach made my eyes tired, and swimming was always a major headache. And who wants to spoil their bikini look wearing specs? It's not very Kelly Brook.

Of course I'd heard about laser eye surgery – but I'd also heard lots of horror stories, like the urban myth that no surgeon had had the procedure themselves, or let their families have it. My worry was that I'd end up with even worse vision, so I decided it wasn't worth the risk.

But last New Year's Eve, I changed my mind. I was on holiday in Sardinia and wanted to look my best for our evening celebrations. I'd bought a gorgeous black dress, had my hair done for the occasion and was really excited about getting glammed up. But there

was one major problem – I'd picked up another eye infection and was forced to wear my glasses. I looked at my reflection in the mirror and sighed as I put my specs on. Everyone reassured me I looked OK, but I felt awful.

Unfortunately, when I got home the eye infection lasted for two months. Wearing glasses every day meant my confidence

told me about a dramatic success story, which made me certain it was the right thing to do. He'd performed laser eye surgery on a woman who was caught up in the tsunami disaster in 2004. The wave struck without warning, but because her eyesight was restored she'd managed to get her children to safety.

Without the surgery, her story

When it was over, I noticed I could immediately read the time on the clock – something I'd never have been able to do before. I beamed and gave my surgeon a big hug.

That day, my vision was still a bit blurred. But the next day when I woke up, it was almost clear – and I could even read the papers!

For the next three nights I had to wear protective goggles, which my boyfriend found hilarious. I didn't care, though – it was worth it to have good eyesight again.

The results have been amazing. I've just been on holiday, and lying on a beach and going swimming was totally hassle-free without the bother of contact lenses or specs. I still have moments where I can't believe I can see and reach for my glasses! Although surgery is expensive, it's more than worth it. People talk about miracles, but it has genuinely changed my life."

I had to wear protective goggles for three nights – my boyfriend found it hilarious

was at an all-time low. As part of my treatment, I had to see an eye specialist – and what he told me was a total shock. It turned out that contact lenses could actually be damaging my eyes and so he recommended laser eye surgery.

After all the myths, I was surprised to hear that rather than surgery being dangerous, wearing contact lenses over a long length of time could be a bigger risk to my eyes. The specialist suggested I make an appointment with a surgeon who had a great track record, and told me the success rate was pretty much down to that person's skill. He said it was important to do research and find a reputable surgeon, rather than look for cheap deals.

When I met the eye surgeon, he instantly put me at ease and dispelled my fears. It turned out he'd treated celebrities, sportsmen and members of the SAS. He also

might have ended in tragedy. And it made me realise how vulnerable you are with bad eyesight.

So I decided to have the operation. I desperately wanted the freedom that people with good eyesight take for granted.

For three days before surgery, I couldn't wear eye make-up – this was the hardest part! Having to go into work with a bare face was a nightmare, but I knew it would be worth it.

On the day of the operation, I was nervous but also excited about being able to see without glasses or contact lenses. The whole surgery took 10 minutes, and it wasn't even as bad as going to the dentist. The worst part was having my eyes clamped – but it was uncomfortable, not painful. When the surgeon started using the laser, I couldn't feel anything – it's a bit like looking into a kaleidoscope when you're a kid.

Laser Surgery: How to Get It

Ali's surgeon, Dr Julian Stevens, gives you the lowdown

- Only 1% of laser eye surgery has complications, which is usually minor. It's no higher than the risk of infection from constant contact lens wearing.
- Developments in eye surgery mean that an ultra-fast laser is used, making it more precise.
- The skill of the surgeon is key. Visit www.julianstevens.co.uk or call 020 7251 4835. The procedure costs £100 for the initial consultation, and £3,600-£3,900 for both eyes.

WORDS: ALI HALL PHOTOS: FREDDY JOSEPH, LIBI PEDDER. MODEL: KATRINA AT ELITE ANYONE CONSIDERING SURGERY SHOULD TAKE INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE BEFORE COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO ANY TREATMENT