

What to Expect During SMILE Eye Surgery Recovery in Mesa



Recovery after SMILE tends to be more comfortable than many patients expect, but it is not entirely without a transition period. Knowing what is normal, from mild haziness in the first few days to when driving and exercise are reasonable again, helps Mesa patients avoid mistaking expected healing for a problem. Here is a realistic walkthrough of what the days and weeks after SMILE typically look like.

What Does Vision Look Like Right After Surgery?

Vision is often noticeably improved within hours of the procedure, though it commonly looks slightly hazy for the first several days, similar to looking through a light fog. This haziness is a normal part of the eye adjusting

and healing rather than a sign that something has gone wrong. Most patients see continued sharpening of their vision day by day during this initial period, with many reaching 20/20 or close to it within the first day or two.

Bright lights and screens can feel slightly more glaring than usual during this window, which is another normal part of the eye's adjustment rather than a cause for concern. Sunglasses are commonly recommended outdoors during the first several days, both for comfort and to reduce unnecessary strain while the eye continues to heal. Patients who spend a lot of time outdoors for work or hobbies should plan to have a pair on hand before their surgery date rather than needing to shop for one immediately afterward.

When Can I Drive After SMILE Surgery?

Many patients are cleared to drive within a day or two after SMILE, though this depends on how quickly individual vision clears and what a follow-up exam shows. Driving at night may take slightly longer to feel comfortable than daytime driving, since glare and halos around lights can be more noticeable during the earliest part of recovery. A surgeon confirms specifically when driving is appropriate at the first post-operative visit rather than leaving it to guesswork.

Arranging a ride for the day of surgery itself and the following appointment is standard practice, since vision immediately after the procedure and while any lingering sedation wears off is not reliable enough for driving. Patients who commute long distances or drive for work should plan ahead for at least a few days without needing to get behind the wheel, purely as a precaution.

Does SMILE Cause Dry Eye During Recovery?

Most SMILE patients do not experience the short-term dryness that commonly follows LASIK, since the procedure disrupts fewer corneal nerves involved in normal tear production. Some mild dryness or a gritty sensation in the first few days is still possible and considered a normal part of healing rather than a complication.

Lubricating drops are typically recommended during the initial recovery period regardless of how mild any dryness feels. Patients who already manage chronic dry eye before surgery are often given a more tailored drop schedule to support comfort during this window, sometimes starting before surgery rather than only afterward.

When Can I Return to Exercise and Normal Activities?

Light activity is often possible within a few days, while more strenuous exercise, swimming, and contact sports typically require a longer waiting period determined at follow-up visits. Because SMILE does not involve a flap, the specific concern about eye trauma disrupting healing is different than it is with LASIK, though the eye still needs time to complete its healing process regardless.

Most patients return to their normal daily routine, including work, within a few days to a week. Screen-heavy jobs sometimes call for more frequent breaks during the first week, since prolonged focus on a screen can make any lingering dryness or haziness more noticeable. Patients who can arrange a lighter workload or a few extra breaks during that first week often report a more comfortable transition back to their normal routine.

Carrot LASIK & Eye Center's SMILE Recovery Support in Mesa

Carrot LASIK & Eye Center schedules follow-up visits at set intervals after SMILE surgery specifically to track healing and confirm vision is progressing as expected rather than leaving patients to judge their own recovery. The practice's team is available to answer questions between scheduled visits if something feels different than what was discussed beforehand. Mesa patients are given clear, written guidance on activity restrictions rather than vague verbal instructions that are easy to forget once they are back at home. Having a written reference also makes it easier for a spouse or family member helping with recovery to know what to expect without needing to ask the patient to recall everything from memory.

Knowing what to expect during SMILE recovery makes the entire healing process feel far more manageable. Carrot LASIK & Eye Center supports Mesa patients through every stage of SMILE recovery with scheduled follow-up care. Schedule a consultation to learn more about the recovery timeline for your specific situation.

Company Description

Carrot LASIK & Eye Center is proud to be Arizona's premier destination for Laser Vision Corrective Surgery. Led by Dr. Matthew Hammond and Dr. Michael Herion, Carrot offers vision correction procedures like LASIK, PRK, SMILE, RLE, cataract surgery, and EVO ICL, and treats medical conditions such as glaucoma, retinal conditions, and contact lens intolerance.

Contact Details

Carrot LASIK & Eye Center

1500 S Dobson Rd #313, Mesa, AZ 85202

(480) 561-6000

Website: <https://carroteyecenter.com/vision-correction-procedures/smile/>

Google Site: <https://sites.google.com/view/carroteyecenter/smile-eye-surgery-mesa>

Google Folder: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dZm_HBtN2VCL-v0vz6UfVcSjjHiC5316?usp=sharing

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