

MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER



COURTESY PHOTO

Memorial Medical Center Dr. Edward Hernandez, left, and Dr. Andrew Mohammed, stand with the SightPath Femtosecond laser, which will help provide bladeless laser cataract removal surgery monthly at the Las Cruces hospital.

State-of-the-art

Doctors use high-tech laser for bladeless cataract surgery

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LAS CRUCES » The newest technology in laser cataract removal is now available in Las Cruces, thanks to doctors at Eyes of the Southwest. The procedure, which is completely bladeless, uses a computer-guided laser and an ultrasonic handpiece—completely eliminating the need for scalpels to remove the cataract, which is a clouding of the lens that affects vision, according to the National Eye Institute.

“The laser performs thousands of very precise micro-bursts, and it’s all computer-guided. Bladeless laser cataract surgery represents one of the most significant advancements in cataract surgery in 25 years and provides a more precise manner by which to perform several steps of the procedure.”

— Dr. Edward Hernandez, owner and president of Eyes of the Southwest

Dr. Edward Hernandez, owner and president of Eyes of the Southwest, is a board-certified ophthalmologist who specializes in cataract surgery and the treatment of ocular disease. On Dec. 2, 2014, he became the first surgeon in Las Cruces to use the bladeless technique. Prior to that, the nearest to Las Cruces that this technique has been used was in Phoenix, Arizona and Lubbock, Texas.

With bladeless cataract surgery, small incisions are made in the lens capsule, crystalline lens and the cornea of the eye.

“The laser performs thousands of very precise micro-bursts, and it’s all computer-guided,” Hernandez explained. “Bladeless laser cataract surgery represents one of the most significant advancements in cataract surgery in 25 years and provides a more precise manner by which to perform several steps of the procedure.”

Hernandez explained that with cataract surgery, precision is key.

“With the laser, our incisions are far more precise than with traditional techniques. We’re able to get rid of certain degrees of astigmatism with the laser,” he said. “When we had to use blades, that was less exact. The capsulorhexis is a key part of cataract surgery—where we manually have to tear an opening in the lens capsule to get to the cataract. And the laser is much more precise in actually giving the exact diameter of opening that we want. It will perform a near-perfect circle. The

laser will actually soften the nucleus, as well, making it easier to remove the fragments.”

While recovery time after cataract surgery is usually minimal, Hernandez explained that there are certain people who could experience a quicker recovery with bladeless surgery.

“There are certain patients that we treat when we want to minimize the amount of energy dissipated within the eye during surgery. When you take a cataract out, there’s energy used. And the more time we’re in the eye, performing surgery, the more cellular loss occurs within the cornea,” he said.

With the laser softening the cataract before the ultrasonic portion of the surgery, it could reduce surgical time and the energy dissipated within the eye.

“So there’s potentially less cell volume loss with this platform,” explained Hernandez. “And because of that, recovery in certain patients may be a little quicker.”

Ahead of the first surgeries in Las Cruces, which were performed at the Memorial Medical Center HealthPlex, 2735 Northrise Drive, Hernandez said that the bladeless technique presented a small logistical challenge.

“We have to utilize two rooms,” he said. “We start the surgery in the room with the laser, and we finish the procedure in the surgical suite. It’s so much more efficient that way, because the staff can be getting a patient ready

while we’re using the laser.”

On the first day, Hernandez five bladeless surgeries.

Efficiency is important, because the laser used in the surgeries is a traveling machine, which Memorial Medical Center leases by the day. It’s called a Mobile Femtosecond laser, and with a price tag of \$500,000, it’s more practical to lease it, and schedule surgeries when the machine is in town, according to MMC officials. The Femto is owned and transported by Sightpath Medical, a Minnesota-based company which specializes in making ophthalmic surgical services available wherever they are needed.

Les Bentz is the Sightpath representative responsible for transporting and setting up the Femto that was used at MMC for the first surgeries. He explained that he works with hospitals from Seattle to Nebraska, but most of his clients are in Colorado. This particular machine, nicknamed Mary Jane, was based out of Denver. He said that it takes about three hours to calibrate and set up.

“Because the laser costs half a million dollars, it doesn’t make sense for a new program to purchase a laser right off the bat,” said Hernandez. “Sightpath comes into town and sets up the laser the day before the surgeries—with all of the latest surgical software updates. They set it up, calibrate it and get it ready. We do the surgeries the next day,

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DEPT. OF HEALTH

Folic acid an important vitamin for healthy children

For many women planning to have children, often the first thing their doctor tells them is to take their vitamins. Not just any vitamins, but prenatal vitamins.

Prenatal vitamins are an important part of pregnancy nutrition — even before conception.



David Morgan
Columnist

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend taking prenatal vitamins as standard

procedure because, even if you eat a healthy diet, you might fall short on key nutrients and prenatal vitamins can help fill any gaps. Most importantly, prenatal vitamins typically contain more folic acid than do standard adult multivitamins, and with good reason.

Folic acid is an essential B vitamin. Therefore, everyone needs it in order to stay in good health.

Folic acid helps build DNA and your body uses it for cell growth and reproduction. It’s particularly important for women between the ages of 15 and 45, according to the CDC, to take 400 mcg of folic acid every day, starting at least one month before getting pregnant, to help prevent major birth defects of the baby’s brain and spine and continue taking them throughout their pregnancy.

Folic acid has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) in developing babies by up to 70 percent. The most common NTDs are spina bifida and anencephaly. In a five-year period from 2007 to 2011, New Mexico averaged 13 cases of spina bifida and five cases of anencephaly every year.

Because half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned, NMDOH and the CDC recommend women keep folic acid in their diets, even if not planning to become pregnant. Too often, by the time women realize they’re pregnant, it might be too late to prevent those birth defects.

The CDC reports Hispanic babies are more likely than others in the U.S. to be born with a neural tube defect. Research shows Hispanics in the U.S. consume the least amount of folic acid and have the least knowledge about folic acid among racial or ethnic groups. The CDC first began researching folic acid’s role in preventing birth defects in the early 1980s, and early studies found the risk for having a baby birth defects was reduced if the mother had taken folic acid around the time of conception.

That research led the U.S. Public Health Service to release the 1992 recommendation still used today that all women who could become pregnant should get 400 mcg of folic acid each day, as well as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 1998 to require many grains, pastas and breakfast cereals be fortified with folic acid. Remember, prenatal vitamins are a complement to a healthy diet — not a substitute for good nutrition. Prenatal vitamins won’t necessarily meet 100 percent of our vitamin and mineral needs. We still have to eat right.

For more information on folic acid, consult your doctor or visit the CDC’s folic acid information page at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/od/ohrt/folicacid/index.html>.

More health » Tips and trends



LCPS Goals good for self-esteem

A new year is time to set some goals. Accomplishing these goals is a great way to promote positive self-esteem, which is essential for good mental health for all ages.

READ THE FULL COLUMN, PAGE C2.



BRIEFS Yoga workshop set for Sunday

A Sun Salutation Yoga Workshop will be held from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Sunday at Tesoro Integrative Health Center, 1605 S. Main St. Cost is \$25. For info, call 575-541-5660.

READ THE FULL BRIEFS, PAGE C2.



TELEVISION Corden to take over Late Late show

Actor James Corden will take over The Late Late Show starting March 23. The ‘Into the Woods’ star will be taking over the nighttime spot for current host Craig Ferguson.

READ THE FULL COLUMN, PAGE C2.

Healthy living

How about some tripe soup for the morning after?



We all know there is no medically proven cure-all to a hangover aside from the obvious: not drinking. If abstaining from alcohol at a party is out of the question, here are some other ideas:

Drink water: Alcohol is a diuretic, and excessive drinking can cause dehydration. Replacing the fluids lost could help you feel a little less miserable.

Eat before you drink: Food helps slow the body’s absorption of alcohol.

Beware of pain killers: Aspirin and other pain killers could irritate an already sensitive stomach. If you need pain relief, try the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) kind, like ibuprofen or naproxen. Acetaminophen and alcohol is a bad combination for the kidneys.

Eat light the morning after: Alcohol metabolism mostly takes place in the liver. The liver also produces glucose, which can interfere with the liver’s production of glucose, which can cause low blood sugar. Eat basic carbohydrates like bread and crackers to offset the symptoms associated with low blood sugar, like dizziness, blurry vision and headache.

— Miami Herald