

Chapter 1

USAF Refractive Surgery (USAF-RS) General Information and Administrative Procedures

- 1.1. This policy allows eligible Air Force (AF) Active Duty (AD) and AF Reserve Component (ARC- includes AF Reserve and Air National Guard) members to undergo refractive surgery (RS) procedures designed to reduce dependence on spectacles or contact lenses. All AF AD/ARC personnel and applicants are managed under this guidance. This policy supersedes prior USAF-RS policies and memoranda.
- 1.2. RS is not a TRICARE covered benefit. RS is intended to reduce operational disadvantages related to wear and care of spectacles and contact lenses by AF personnel engaged in certain occupational specialties. Though RS may be operationally beneficial in some personnel, it is an elective procedure. There is no requirement for any member or applicant to obtain any form of RS. Any individual planning RS should read and understand the benefits, limitations and risks associated with these procedures.
- 1.3. Compliance with this policy is mandatory. AF AD/ARC members who undergo unauthorized RS treatment may be disqualified or restricted from certain duties. If appropriate AF vision standards cannot be met following RS, the member may be disqualified from continued military service.
- 1.4. AF AD and ARC Non-Aviation and Aviation-related Special Duty (Non-AASD) personnel (eligible for AD elective surgery benefits) in compliance with this guidance are authorized treatment at DoD RS centers and post-RS management at their military treatment facilities. Aviation and Aviation-related Special Duty personnel/applicants are managed and authorized treatment as outlined in 3.6.3.1.1 – 3.
- 1.5. ARC personnel *who are not eligible* for AD elective surgery benefits and others under certain circumstances may undergo RS *at their own expense* at civilian centers. AD and ARC members pursuing treatment at civilian RS centers are responsible to meet appropriate pre-operative criteria, submit required application documents, obtain written approval to proceed from USAF-RS Registry prior to treatment and obtain and meet post-operative requirements. Additional Air Force guidance for elective surgery is found in AFI 48-123, *Medical Examinations and Standards*, AFI 41-101, *Obtaining Alternative Medical and Dental Care*, AFI 41-210, *Patient Administration Functions*, AFI 44-117, *Ophthalmic Services*, and AFI 36-3003, *Military Leave Program*.
- 1.6. AF personnel are separated into three Management Groups:
 - 1.6.1. Trained “Aviation and Aviation-related Special Duty” (AASD) personnel
 - 1.6.2. Applicants to AASD
 - 1.6.3. Warfighter personnel
- 1.7. Chapter 2 defines inclusion criteria for the three Management Groups. For AASD Management Groups, members must meet both Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) and Aviation Service Code (ASC) requirements. AF personnel who do not meet AASD criteria or have been permanently disqualified from AASD must comply with requirements of the Warfighter Management Group. A tool to assist in Management Group determination is available on the following website: AF Knowledge Exchange (DotMil): <https://kx.afms.mil/USAF-RS> or (Public Access): <http://airforcemedicine.afms.mil/USAF-RS>

- 1.8. Each Management Group has specific USAF-RS requirements described in detail in chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively.
- 1.9. For the purpose of this policy, RS includes:
- 1.9.1. Advanced Surface Ablation (ASA) procedures
 - 1.9.1.1. Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK)
 - 1.9.1.2. Laser In-Situ Epithelial Keratomileusis (LASEK)
 - 1.9.1.3. Epi-LASIK
 - 1.9.1.4. Wave-Front Guided Photorefractive Keratectomy (WFG-PRK)
 - 1.9.2. Intra-Stromal Ablation (ISA) procedures
 - 1.9.2.1. Standard Laser In-Situ Keratomileusis (LASIK) and its variants
 - 1.9.2.2. Wave-Front Guided Laser In-Situ Keratomileusis (WFG-LASIK) - "custom ablation"
 - 1.9.2.3. Technological advances of the basic LASIK procedure, such as femtosecond technology, "all laser LASIK"
- 1.10. Other RS procedures are not authorized unless approved by AF/SG or designee.
- 1.11. Phototherapeutic Keratectomy (PTK) is a therapeutic application of excimer laser technology used for diseases of the anterior cornea. In the context of this policy, PTK is not an RS procedure. PTK is for medical management of corneal anomalies independent of the USAF-RS program.
- 1.12. USAF-RS Re-treatment: For the purpose of this program, retreatments are considered new treatment. Personnel who desire or require retreatment must submit application IAW with their Management Group requirements.
- 1.13. One of the goals of the USAF-RS program is to ensure RS treatment is prioritized in accordance with AF mission support. Prioritization categories are based on specific Management Groups and duty requirements. AF members seeking RS are assigned to one of these three priority categories:
- 1.13.1. Priority I:** Personnel assigned to AF AASD career fields. Not included are permanently disqualified aircrew and/or former aviators who have cross-trained from aviation career duties.
 - 1.13.2. Priority II:** Personnel whose routine military duties require wear of Night Vision Goggles (NVG), eye protection, or respiratory protection. This does not include nuclear biological chemical (NBC) masks worn only for deployment.
 - 1.13.3. Priority III:** Personnel who do not meet any of the above criteria in his/her current military duties.