

# Lens Offers Clear Vision For Cataract Patients

By Robyn Fontes Taylor  
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At 48, Terry Combs is younger than many cataract patients. But the clouding on the lenses of his eyes made the Stephens City resident older before his time.

He needed reading glasses and a magnifying glass to see small print. Commuting to his job in Chantilly was a challenge, especially at night when the the lights of the oncoming cars would cause a dangerous glare. Rainy nights were especially treacherous.

Thanks to the new Alcon Acrysof Restor lens, approved by the Food and Drug Administration in March, Combs is able to read the fine print and drive comfortably at night.

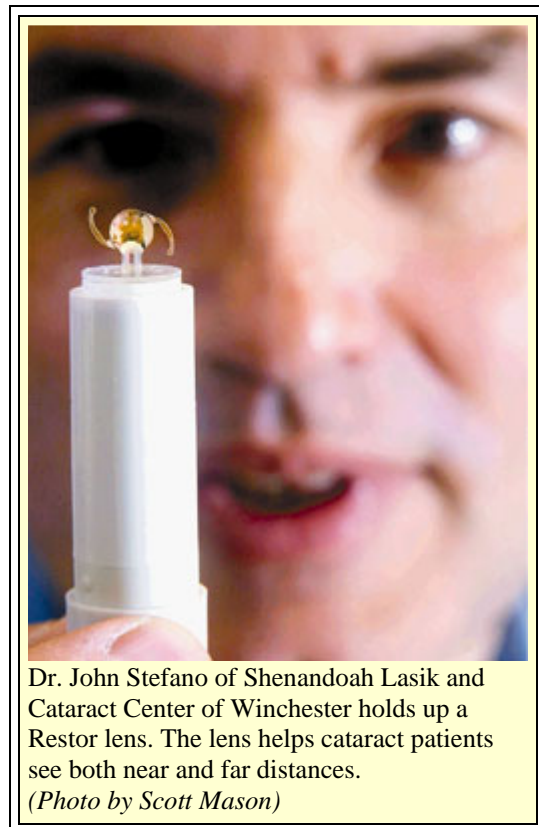
“I don’t need glasses at all now. The colors and everything are so vivid — not like it was before. It helps with the details and intensity of everything,” said Combs, who had the Restor lens put in his left eye in May and his right eye in June.

Replacing cloudy lenses with clear ones isn’t new. But other lenses only improve distance vision. Eyeglasses would still be needed for reading and any close-up tasks.

The Restor lens improves both near and far vision.

“These lenses are solving more than one problem,” said Dr. John Stefano of Shenandoah Lasik and Cataract Center in Winchester who put the Restor lenses in Combs’ eyes. “The surgical technique is the same, but it’s knowing how to use it.”

According to Stefano, he is the only physician in the Winchester area and the second physician in the greater D.C. area to be certified by the company to put in the Restor lens.



Dr. John Stefano of Shenandoah Lasik and Cataract Center of Winchester holds up a Restor lens. The lens helps cataract patients see both near and far distances.

*(Photo by Scott Mason)*

Since the FDA closely regulates replacement lenses, Stefano said, the company won't sell the lenses to anyone not specially trained in the technique.

Stefano performed his first surgery with the Restor lens on May 24.

Stefano recommends the lenses for his patients 55 and older. Younger patients can usually do just as well with Lasik eye surgery, which is less expensive and quicker.

But for those who need help seeing both near and far, the Restor lens is a great option, said Stefano, who has been practicing in Winchester since 1983.

The lens works much differently from the human eye (which uses muscles to manipulate the lens) or biofocals (which requires moving the head to align the lens).

A ring pattern within the Restor lens creates multiple images, Stefano said. The brain is able to decipher which image it wants to look at.

During the surgery, which Stefano performs at Winchester's Surgi-Center, a tiny incision is made in the eye, so that the surgeon can break up or wash away the cataract. The lens is then inserted into the same incision.

Most patients report no side effects or distorted vision. And about 80 percent of patients won't need any glasses at all, Stefano said.

About 8 percent of patients will notice halos or glare. And some patients may still need to wear eyeglasses with a mild prescription for reading.

For cataract patients, many insurance plans will pick up some of the cost. The lenses run about \$1,000 to \$1,200 per eye above what insurance would pay.

For non-cataract patients, the cost is more like \$5,000 to \$5,500 per eye, Stefano said.

But the transformation is permanent — and life-changing.

"I'm tickled to death," Combs said of his new-and-improved vision. "I wouldn't hesitate to do it again."