

# Lifestyle

## Figure skater achieves her Olympic vision

'The lifestyle benefits of laser vision correction are priceless,' says Olympic figure skater Joannie Rochette

By Lifestyle Staff | August 31, 2010



**R**ebelliousness is inherent in youth. Some teens get body piercings. Others get tattoos. Still others experiment with bizarre wardrobe choices. Olympic hero Joannie Rochette had something completely different in mind.

At the age of 18, the native of Île Dupas, Que., visited a LASIK MD centre where she booked an appointment for laser vision correction surgery — an experience that would change the way she lives her life and have a profound impact on her performance as a figure skater.

Rochette had worn glasses since the age of six. When she began participating in figure skating competitions a few years later, glasses had to be strapped to her head so they wouldn't fall off.

"You look like a princess, but you have glasses attached to your face. It's not very pretty," says Rochette.

Before Rochette was old enough to wear contacts, she would have to travel to her optometrist who would insert contacts for her prior to competitions, as well as take them out afterwards. Once she was allowed to wear contacts regularly, they caused repeated bouts of conjunctivitis. Eventually, Rochette's eyes could only tolerate contacts for two hours at a time. Even during those infection-free hours, her contacts would often fall out while skating, preventing her from seeing any of the other girls on the ice during practices. It became obvious to Rochette that her problems could be solved by having laser vision correction. "Everything goes through your field of vision, especially in figure skating because you're rotating three times in the air," Rochette says. "And when you get out it's really important to spot with your eyes where you're exiting."

After consulting the Yellow Pages for surgeons, Rochette wound up at LASIK MD. After her procedure, her confidence as an athlete soared.

But Rochette is quick to say that everyone, not just world-class athletes, would welcome the benefits of clear, natural vision. Rochette says people will get more enjoyment from their social lives, and find more success at work. And she still can't get over the delight of swimming without contacts.

And, oh yeah, it also helped her skating, which led her to a bronze medal in Vancouver and into the hearts of a spellbound nation.

"I loved my surgery and it really did change my life," she swoons. "The first summer I got it done, every morning I was getting up, I couldn't believe it — I could see!" she says excitedly. "When you get surgery it's like HD, HDTV really."

Dr. Avi Wallerstein, co-founder of LASIK MD, says laser vision correction offers a long list of advantages. "All of a sudden, patients eliminate a hassle factor in their lives. There's no more time, energy, effort involving cleaning contact lenses, removing them, replacing them, buying them, remembering to bring

them on your vacation, packing them, everything," he says. "Or glasses — no scratching your glasses, no bending, no breaking and no more fogging up."

Like Rochette, Wallerstein and his partner Dr. Mark Cohen, President and co-founder of LASIK MD, are another example of a Canadian success story. LASIK MD was founded in 2001. Today, according to LASIK MD's own data, half of all laser vision correction procedures performed in Canada take place at a LASIK MD clinic. Additionally, Wallerstein and co-founder Dr. Mark Cohen were presented a national award for service excellence by Ernst & Young in 2008. LASIK MD is also one of the 50 Best Managed Companies in Canada, as voted on by Deloitte and its partners.

Wallerstein says no one should be fearful about getting the procedure done at LASIK MD. Wallerstein calls laser vision correction "the alternative to eye glasses and contact lenses." By reshaping the

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Continued on reverse.

**LASIK MD Co-Founder Dr. Avi Wallerstein says a major priority is patient safety, which is why LASIK MD uses the latest and newest technology.**

**Dr. Wallerstein is seen here using a state-of-the-art retinal camera during a preoperative examination.**



cornea, which is the clear part of the eye that acts like its window, images can come into proper focus on the retina resulting in clear vision. The painless, 10-minute procedure is performed using state-of-the-art technology and recovery usually takes between one and two days. Many are back to work the day after surgery.

Wallerstein says a major priority is patient safety. “We really have the latest, newest technology that is clinically proven and has a track record of giving the best outcomes.”

LASIK MD’s patients also benefit from a surgical specialist consult group that reviews cases from across the country, giving patients access to the opinions and expertise of 10 of the most experienced laser eye surgeons in Canada. LASIK MD’s surgeons also have universalized checklists — still an uncommon occurrence in medical circles, and one that has proven to result in maximizing safety, says Wallerstein.

“If someone goes into the Vancouver clinic and has surgery or if someone goes into Halifax and has surgery, it is exactly the same equipment, it is exactly the same pre-op, post-op, same technology and same methodology that the surgeon will use,” Wallerstein says, adding that each surgeon is trained and retrained to maintain these rigorous standards.

As with any medical procedure, there are always risks, but these are very low. According to Wallerstein, there is virtually no chance of any permanent damage. “If you have a complication during surgery, we’ll stop. There’s no danger of losing your vision,” Wallerstein says.

The most common risk is getting dry eye for the first few months and the risk of infection is one in 50,000, according to Wallerstein. But it’s all about keeping it relative; he says the risk of infection with contacts is one in 100.

All of these low-risk, high-reward factors combine to make LASIK surgery widely regarded as one of the safest elective procedures in medicine. It also yields some of the highest

levels of patient satisfaction of any procedure according to results of a worldwide study printed in a 2009 issue of *Ophthalmology*.

Whether you’re an Olympian or just someone who wants to be able to read your alarm clock, it’s possible to free yourself from glasses and contacts, and start living your life with clear, natural vision.

## Seeing: THE FULL SCOPE

The pre-operative and post-operative phases are important to the outcome of the laser vision correction procedure. There are several details that patients should be aware of.

Candidacy for the procedure is determined at a free pre-operative consultation, where a series of painless tests are conducted. Depending on prescriptions, a majority of patients need their pupils dilated for the examination, so it is recommended you bring sunglasses due to the resulting sensitivity to light.

The post-operative phase requires you to relax in a waiting area for 45 minutes to an hour immediately following surgery. Your eye care professional will then verify that your eyes have begun to heal. You will be provided with special sunglasses and eye drops to keep your eyes lubricated during the recuperation process.

Most people return to work the day after surgery, and many activities can be enjoyed again after three days to a week, depending on the activity.

Post-operative examinations take place 24 hours after the surgery, one to two weeks after and one month after. These exams help to ensure that the healing process is proceeding normally.