

How to care for your contact lenses – 10 do's and don'ts

We don't mean to scare you; we want to prepare you. Wear contact lenses? Then you should know infections can be a common side effect when contact lenses are not properly cleaned and cared for.¹

And the risks are pretty high. Of the roughly 41 million American adults who wear contact lenses, pretty much all of them manage to get germs in their eyes at some point.² Nearly a third of contact lens wearers said they've had to visit the doctor because of red or painful eyes.³

Some visit for infections as well. If you are new to wearing contact lenses, we'd like to introduce you to one lurking visitor: fungus. Proper cleaning is key, but there are other essential guidelines to preventing fungi (or other infections and ailments) from visiting your eyes. Following are five do's and five don'ts on how to care for contact lenses.

1

DON'T WAIT TO SPRAY, OR APPLY MAKEUP TOO SOON.

We love a nice coif, but don't apply hairspray after your contacts have been put on; it could adhere to their surfaces. As for makeup, apply it after the lenses are on, but do not use waterproof mascara. It may stain soft contact lenses.⁴

2

DON'T PUT OFF CLEANING.

Sure you're tired, but the few minutes you invest in cleaning your contacts tonight could save you from an infection. Contact lenses **require responsibility**. Clean your lenses regularly as advised by your eye doctor and make sure to dry out the contact lens case as well. Bacteria love moisture.⁵

3

DON'T PUT THEM IN YOUR MOUTH!

Resist the temptation to moisten your contact lenses with saliva or put them in your mouth, which is full of bacteria.⁶ Also, skip the saline solution, since it will not do the job of disinfecting. The same goes for tap water, which can contain impurities and microorganisms. For that matter, don't wear them while swimming or in the hot tub.⁷

4

DON'T SLEEP WITH THEM ON.

At least half of Americans who wear contact lenses fess up to sleeping or napping with them on.⁸ Sleeping with contact lenses on, even for a short nap, can lead to infections, redness and soreness. Please, just don't.⁹

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6

DO WASH UP.

Wash your hands before applying your contact lenses – every time. And sorry to be fussy, but you should avoid scented or oily soaps – they might adhere to the surface. Lastly, unless you prefer the world to have a gossamer look, note that creams and lotions can leave a film on the lenses.¹¹

7

DO GIVE THEM A RUB.

Always rub your contact lenses with your fingers to clean residue and surface build-up. Do this even if you are using a “no-rub” solution. When cleaning your contact lenses, always use disinfecting solutions, not water. The solution also should be used to sterilize the case.¹²

8

DO KEEP A GOOD SOLUTION.

Make sure your **disinfecting solution is completely fresh**. The solution maker will have recommendations on how often to change it. Follow these guidelines even if you do not wear your contacts daily. Discard all of the old solution in your contact lens case – don't simply top it off with fresh. It might not have enough organism-killing properties. Yuck!¹³

9

DO KNOW THE SIGNS OF INFECTION.

Are you detecting a theme here? Even if you do everything right, the risk of contact lens-related eye infection could remain due to environmental factors. Symptoms may include blurry vision, pain, unusual redness, tearing or discharge, increased light sensitivity or a feeling like something is in your eye. If you experience these symptoms, call your eye doctor.¹⁴

10

DO SCHEDULE YOUR ANNUAL EYE EXAM.

Even if your contact lenses come by mail, you should continue to get an annual eye exam. Your contact lenses **will need to be replaced** occasionally, as prescribed by your eye doctor.¹⁵ Also, your vision might change, which means your contact lens prescription would need to be updated. Further, a regular visit with your eye doctor is an **opportunity to ask** questions, reinforce proper care guidelines and discuss the need for updated frames and lenses, too.

¹¹“Contact Lens-Related Eye Infections,” by Kierstan Boyd, American Academy of Ophthalmology, Oct. 14, 2015, www.aaa.org/eye-health/diseases/contact-lens-related-eye-infections

¹²“CDC to 40 Million Contact Lens Wearers: You're Doing It Wrong,” by Maggie Fox, NBC News, Aug. 21, 2015, www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-says-40-million-contact-lens-wearers-are-doing-it-n413351

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴“Contact Lenses and Cosmetics,” American Optometric Association, www.aaa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/contact-lenses/contact-lenses-and-cosmetics?sso=y

¹⁵“Proper Care of Contact Lenses,” by Kierstan Boyd, American Academy of Ophthalmology, March 1, 2016, www.aaa.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/contact-lens-care

¹⁶“Do's and Don'ts,” American Optometric Association, www.aaa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/contact-lenses/dos-and-donts?sso=y

¹⁷“Cleaning Contact Lenses,” CooperVision, www.coopervision.com/about-contacts/cleaning-contact-lenses

¹⁸“CDC to 40 Million Contact Lens Wearers: You're Doing It Wrong,” by Maggie Fox, NBC News, Aug. 21, 2015, www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-says-40-million-contact-lens-wearers-are-doing-it-n413351

¹⁹“Top 5 Things You May Not Know About Contact Lenses,” Valley Eyecare Center, www.valleyeyecareaz.com/top-5-things-you-might-not-know-about-contact-lenses/

²⁰“Proper care of Contact Lenses,” by Kierstan Boyd, American Academy of Ophthalmology, March 1, 2016, www.aaa.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/contact-lens-care

²¹“Tips for Contact Lens Wearers,” AllAboutVision.com, www.allaboutvision.com/contacts/contact-lens-tips.htm

²²“Tips for Contact Lens Wearers,” AllAboutVision.com, www.allaboutvision.com/contacts/contact-lens-tips.htm

²³“Do's and Don'ts,” American Optometric Association, www.aaa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/contact-lenses/dos-and-donts?sso=y

²⁴“Contact Lens-Related Eye Infections,” by Kierstan Boyd, American Academy of Ophthalmology, Oct. 14, 2015,

²⁵“Do's and Don'ts,” American Optometric Association, www.aaa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/contact-lenses/dos-and-donts?sso=y