

Caring for Your Contact Lenses and Your Eyes

Following these steps will extend the life of your contact lenses and protect the safety and health of your eyes.

Keep Lenses Clean

The type of lens you have determines how you care for it. Disposable extended-wear soft lenses need the least care, and conventional soft lenses need extensive care. To avoid vision-threatening complications, you must carefully follow directions for lens care. If you have a hard time following the cleaning steps, tell your eye care professional. You may be able to simplify the steps, or you may want to switch to disposable lenses.

1. Before handling contact lenses, wash and rinse hands. Use a mild non-cosmetic soap. Soaps with perfumes, oils, or lotions leave a film on the hands, which you may transfer to your lenses and cause eye irritation or blurred vision.
2. Dry hands with a clean, lint-free towel.
3. If you use hair spray, use it before you put in your contacts. It's also a good idea to keep your fingernails short and smooth to avoid damaging your lenses or scratching the eye.
4. After your contacts are in your eyes, put on makeup so you don't get any on your lenses. Take out contact lenses before you remove makeup for the same reason.
5. Different types of contact lenses require special care and certain types of products. Always use the disinfecting solution, eye drops, and enzymatic cleaners your eye care professional recommended. Some eye products or eye drops are not safe for contact lens wearers.
6. Never use tap water directly on lenses, and never put contact lenses in your mouth to "rinse" them. Microorganisms can live in even distilled water, causing infection or sight damage.
7. Clean each contact by rubbing it gently with your index finger in the palm of your other hand. Most multipurpose solutions don't have "No Rub" on their labels anymore. Lightly rubbing your contact removes surface buildup.
8. Clean your contact lens case every time you use it with either sterile solution or hot tap water. Let it air dry. Replace the contact lens storage case every three months.

Ensuring Safe Use of Contact Lens Solution

Not emptying the solution out of your contact lens case after each use could cost you your sight. That's because solutions that are left over in the case after a disinfection cycle are essentially "dirty." Using fresh solution each time helps reduce the risk of problems.

"The solution no longer has the same effectiveness for disinfection as when it was freshly placed in the case," says Bernard Lepri, O.D., M.S., M.Ed., of the Division of Ophthalmic and Ear, Nose and Throat Devices in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH). "The leftover solution can have little disinfecting chemical left to kill bacteria and other micro-organisms that may contaminate your contact lenses and lead to serious eye infections."

Wear Contacts Safely

Eye care experts currently consider daily disposable lenses the safest soft contact lenses for your eyes. Talk to your eye care professional to determine which may be the best choice for you. Then follow his guidance on care.

1. Each day, wear your contacts only as long as your eye care professional recommended.
2. If you think you'll have trouble remembering when to change your lenses, ask your eye care professional for a chart to track wearing schedule. If he doesn't have one, consider creating one on your own.
3. Never wear another person's contact lenses, especially if someone has already worn them. Using other people's contact lenses can spread any infection or particles from their eyes to yours.
4. Do not sleep with contact lenses in your eyes unless you are prescribed "extended wear" contacts. Closed eyes don't allow tears to carry a healthy amount of oxygen to your eyes.
5. Don't let the tip of solution bottles touch other surfaces, including fingers, eyes, or contact lenses. All of these can contaminate the solution.
6. Wearing contact lenses may cause your eyes to become more sensitive to sunlight. Wear sunglasses with total UV protection or a wide brim hat when in the sun.
7. To keep eyes lubricated, use a re-wetting solution or plain saline solution that your eye doctor has approved.
8. If you accidentally insert contacts inside out, it won't harm your eyes, but it will be uncomfortable. To avoid this, place a contact lens on the tip of your finger so that it forms a cup. Look at the contact lens from the side. If the cup looks like it is flaring out at the top and has a lip, the contact lens is inside out. If it looks like the letter "U", the contact lens is right side out.
9. If you develop any eye irritation, remove your contact lenses and don't use them again until you talk with your eye care professional. Wearing a contaminated pair of lenses invites the infection to stay. When you get back to wearing contacts, closely follow your doctor's instructions to prevent eye infections.
10. Visit your eye doctor immediately if you have any sudden vision loss, persistent blurred vision, light flashes, eye pain, infection, swelling, unusual redness, or irritation.

Dos and Don'ts for Contact Lens Wearers

DO:

- Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses to reduce the chance of getting an infection.
- Remove the lenses immediately and consult your eye care professional if your eyes become red, irritated, or your vision changes.
- Always follow the directions of your eye care professional and all labeling instruction for proper use of contact lenses and lens care products.
- Use contact lens products and solutions recommended by your eye care professional.
- Rub and rinse your contact lenses as directed by your eye care professional.
- Clean and disinfect your lenses properly following all labeling instructions provided with your lens care products.
- Clean, rinse, and air dry your lens case each time lenses are removed. You may want to flip over your lens case while air drying so that excess solution can drain out of the case. Contact lens cases can be a source of bacterial growth.
- Replace your contact lens storage case every 3-6 months.

DON'T:

- Don't use contact lens solutions that have gone beyond the expiration or discard date.
- Don't "top-off" the solutions in your case. Always discard all of the leftover contact lens solution after each use. Never reuse any lens solution.
- Don't expose your contact lenses to any water: tap, bottled, distilled, lake, or ocean water. Never use non-sterile water (distilled water, tap water, or any homemade saline solution). Exposure of contact lenses to water has been associated with *Acanthamoeba keratitis*, a corneal infection that is resistant to treatment and cure.
- Don't put your lenses in your mouth to wet them. Saliva is not a sterile solution.

Don't transfer contact lens solutions into smaller travel size containers. This can affect the sterility of the solution which can lead to an eye infection. Transferring solutions into smaller size containers may also leave consumers open to accidentally using a solution that is not intended for the eyes.

Small travel size solution bottles are always available at the office, please contact us if you are planning a trip and need lens solutions.