

2019 CONTACT LENS SAFETY TALKING POINTS

According to the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](https://www.fda.gov/) (FDA)-

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates contact lenses and certain contact lens care products as medical devices.
- Approximately 40 million Americans wear contact lenses.
- Contact lenses are NOT over-the-counter (OTC) devices. Companies that sell them as such are misbranding the device and violating FTC regulations by selling contact lenses without having your prescription.

Data from the new CDC MMWR study, [Corneal Infections Associated with Sleeping in Contact Lenses](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/aa6001a1.htm):

- Among the many behaviors that increase the risk for a contact lens–related corneal infection, sleeping in lenses is one of the riskiest and one of the most commonly reported behaviors among adolescent and adult contact lens wearers
- Approximately one third of contact lens wearers report sleeping or napping in their lenses.
- Sleeping in lenses, whether inadvertently, occasionally, or as part of a prescribed wearing schedule (i.e., extended wear lenses), increases the risk for contact lens–related eye infections six- to eightfold
- In the United States, contact lens prescriptions are valid for only 1–2 years, depending on the state.
- Although some contact lenses are approved by FDA for overnight wear, the increased risk for infection is acknowledged by their classification as a Class 3 medical device, which includes medical devices with the greatest risk for harm such as intraocular lenses and implantable pacemakers.

The two biggest risk factors for Acanthamoeba keratitis are: poor lens hygiene and exposure to water while wearing lenses. <https://www.preventblindness.org/acanthamoeba-keratitis-and-contact-lenses>

According to the AAO/Eyesmart: <https://www.aaopt.org/eye-health/diseases/what-causes-contact-lens-infections>

There are a number of things that can cause a contact lens-related infection. Some causes of infection may include:

- using extended-wear lenses
- sleeping in your contact lenses
- having microbes build up under the lens
- [herpes virus](#)
- bacteria, fungi, or parasites
- not keeping lenses or cases clean, or reusing or topping off contact lens solution



According to the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/contactlenses/fast-facts.html>

Who Uses Contact Lenses

- An estimated 45 million people in the U.S. wear contact lenses ¹.
- Two-thirds of contact lens wearers are female ¹.
- The average age of contact lens wearers worldwide is 31 years old ².
- An estimated 8% of contact lens wearers are under 18 years old, 17% are between ages 18-24, and 75% of adults age 25 and older wear contacts ¹.

Contact Lenses in the U.S.

- Contact lenses are medical devices and are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act ³.
- Rigid, or hard, contact lenses made from plastic were first produced in the U.S. between 1938-1940 ⁴.
- Soft contact lenses were first introduced to the U.S. in 1971 ⁵.
- Ninety percent of contact lens wearers use soft contact lenses ¹.

Benefits of Contact Lens Use

- People can use many different methods to improve their vision, and no single method is the best solution for everyone. Contact lenses are one of several effective options.
- Contact lenses can help people see better without affecting their appearance or interfering with many sports and activities.
- Some children and teens report feeling dramatically better about their appearance when wearing contact lenses ^{6, 7}.
- Compared to wearing glasses, children switching to contact lenses reported significant improvements in the areas of perceived appearance, participation in activities, and satisfaction with vision correction ⁷.
- Specially designed contact lenses can improve the ability to focus and temporarily reduce poor distance vision (near-sightedness) in certain contact lens wearers ^{3, 8}.

Complications & Risk Factors

- Serious eye infections that can lead to blindness affect up to 1 out of every 500 contact lens users per year [9](#).
- Not following proper contact lens care instructions has been linked to outbreaks of serious eye infections [10](#).
- Between 40%-90% of contact lens wearers do not properly follow the care instructions for their contact lenses [11](#).
- Approximately 99% of respondents reported at least one contact lens hygiene behavior previously associated with an increased risk of eye infection or inflammation [1](#).
- Improper cleaning and irregular replacement of contact lenses and contact lens cases—as well as other behaviors relating to contact lens hygiene and care—have been linked to a higher risk of complications [11-13](#).
- Keratitis—a painful eye infection often linked to improper contact lens use—leads to 1 million doctor and hospital visits annually, at a cost of \$175 million to the US healthcare system [14](#).

Prevention

Keep your eyes healthy while wearing contact lenses by following [these tips](#), and always be sure to carry a pair of glasses with you—just in case you have to take out your contact lenses.

References

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