

Advice if you wear soft contact lenses



Helpful guidance and tips for wearing and maintaining your soft contact lenses

What are soft contact lenses?

Soft contact lenses are made of a sponge-like material. They absorb water and most soft lenses have a water content of over 50%. This is not pure water, but must match the salt concentration of your tears. Sponges are excellent for growing bacteria, which can cause infection, so it is vital that you clean the lenses carefully and disinfect them to reduce the risk of harming your eyes. If you wear daily disposable contact lenses you should never reuse them.



Hygiene

There is a small increased risk of developing eye infections if you wear contact lenses of any type – after all, you are putting something into your eye. Before touching your eyes or

contact lenses, thoroughly wash and dry your hands. By paying careful attention to hygiene, and having regular check-ups, you can make sure that you keep the risk of infection as low as possible.



Inserting lenses

Check the lens is the right way round and has no splits or damage. Use a finger from one hand to hold your lower lid and a finger from the other hand on the upper lid. Grip the lids

under the eyelashes and hold the lids apart. With the lens on the tip of your finger, gently place the lens on the centre of your eye. If a lens feels uncomfortable, press a finger on the edge of the lens, slide it onto the white of your eye and slide it back. If this does not help, remove the lens, check for damage, clean it and put it in again.



Removing lenses

Pull your lower lid down with your middle finger. With your forefinger, press on the edge of the lens and slide it down, then pinch firmly between your thumb and forefinger.

Or use one finger from each hand on the upper and lower lids, as you do when putting them in. Pull your eyelids wide apart, press onto the white of the eye and use your fingers to squeeze together.



Cleaning lenses

If you are reusing the lenses you will need to clean them each day. After you have taken it out, place the lens in the palm of your hand and add a few drops of your multi-purpose solution. Rub both sides of the lens for about 10 seconds, then rinse off with a vigorous squirt of solution.



Disinfecting the lenses

After rubbing and rinsing, place the lenses in the storage case and cover them completely with fresh storage solution. You should throw the solution away when you next use the lenses and leave the case to air dry. Clean the case with storage solution every week but don't use tap water. Throw the case away and use a new one each time you open a new bottle of solution. Never reuse daily disposable contact lenses.



If you wear make-up

Apply make-up after you have put your contact lenses in, and remove it after removing the contact lenses. Use non-greasy make-up and do not get any on the lenses. If you use hand

cream, apply it after you have finished handling your lenses. Keep your eyes shut if you are using hair spray or a make-up fixing spray.



Daily check

Check your eyes every day. Can you see clearly? Are your eyes red? Are the lenses comfortable? If your eyes feel tired, remove the lenses early. Do not continue to wear contact

lenses that are uncomfortable, and get advice from your optometrist or optician.



Replacement

Replace the lenses as often as you are told to by your optometrist or optician. This could be every day, every week, every fortnight or every month.

Top tips if you wear contact lenses

- Good lens wear and care is essential to prevent avoidable eye problems. Wash your hands and dry them thoroughly before using any type of contact lens and follow all the recommended procedures.
- Never use tap water to clean lenses — this could lead to serious problems, including corneal ulcers and eye infections. Follow the manufacturer's directions for cleaning, disinfecting and wearing the lenses.
- Don't change how you clean your contact lenses without asking your optometrist or optician first.
- Replace your contact lens case regularly to reduce the risk of infection and always use fresh solution to store your lenses.
- You shouldn't wear your lenses for longer than you have been told by your optometrist, and certainly not for more than 16 hours in a day. You should never sleep in them unless they are specifically designed for overnight wear.
- Don't bathe or go swimming in your contact lenses.
- Never share or swap contact lenses with anyone else.
- If you wear eye make-up, always apply it after putting your contact lenses in.
- Go to regular after-care appointments with your optometrist — at least once a year or more often if your optometrist recommends it, or if you have problems.
- If in doubt, take them out. If you experience any signs of redness, pain or loss of vision — consult your optometrist or optician immediately for advice.

About the AOP

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the leading representative membership organisation for optometrists and other optical professionals in the UK. We support our community of more than 16,500 members to fulfil their professional roles to protect the nation's eye health. Find more information at www.aop.org.uk/patients

