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Top tips for contact lens safety by Gene Johnson

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According to NHS figures, there are over million contact lens users in the UK. Contact lenses provide another option to glasses that is more convenient - especially when playing sport - and offer more complete vision. For others, the choice of wearing contact lenses boils down to image; they simply prefer themselves without glasses.

But, wearing contact lenses raises the possibility of eye infection because you are putting a foreign item into your eye. If your fingers and lenses are clean the chance of infection is insignificant, however poor hygiene and disregard of safety procedures is terrible news for your eyes.

To ensure your eyes stay infection free, bright and healthy follow these simple instructions.

Reusable lenses

Cleanliness and impeccable hygiene are especially vital for reusable lenses worn daily but replaced monthly. After removing contact lenses you must completely disinfect them. For most people this is achieved in a little storage case filled with saline solution and set aside over night. The solution cleans your lenses and destroys any bacteria that could be lurking around.

Never re-use or top up disinfection solution as the bacteria may be trapped in the solution and this can lead to infection the next time you insert the lenses in your eyes.

Always wash, using soap, and dry your hands totally before and after insertion and removal.

Never leave your contact lenses in for longer than recommended by your optometrist.

It's also a good idea to clean the contact lens case; leave it to air dry each day and replace it each month.

Disposable and extended wear contact lenses

Extended wear lenses can be worn continuously, even when you're sleeping, for as long as one month. Daily lenses are used for one day then disposed of. Both types do not require disinfecting solutions. Although, you should still ensure your hands are clean and dry when you put in and remove your lenses.

General tips

Try and have one day off each week and wear your glasses rather than contact lenses. You should regularly have your eyes checked over by an optometrist; they will check for infections and examine your overall eye health. If you do see any signs of infection, for instance redness, gooiness and/or white spots on your eyes you should speak to an optometrist as soon as possible.

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Gene Johnson - About Author:

Damien Croft is freelance writer and specialist in optometry. He recommends a http://www.visiondirect.co.uk

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