



Contact Lenses and Eye Infections

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Millions of people wear contact lenses safely every day. But there is a risk of getting an eye infection from them.

Keratitis is the most common infection from wearing contact lenses. It is when the cornea—the clear, dome-shaped window of the eye—becomes infected. In some cases, it can scar the cornea, affecting your vision. If the cornea is severely scarred, a corneal transplant may be needed to have clear vision again.

What causes contact lens infections?

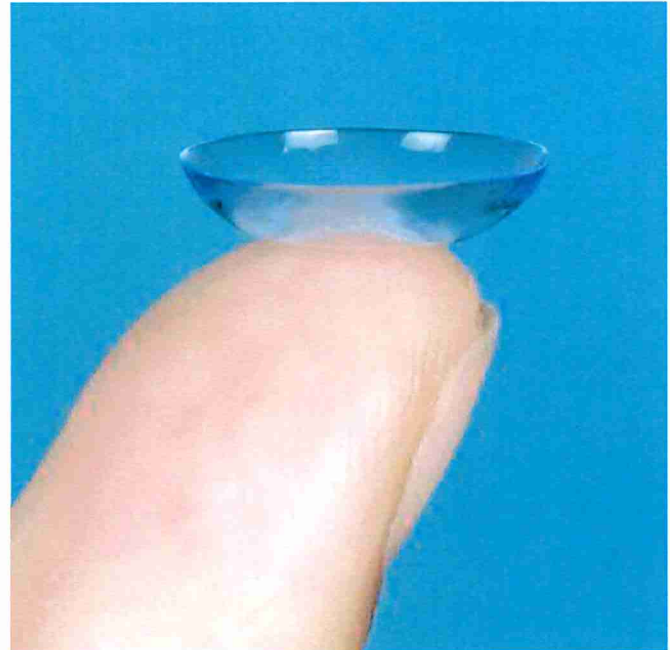
There are a number of things that can cause a contact lens-related infection. Some causes of infection may include:

- using extended-wear lenses
- sleeping in your contact lenses
- having microbes build up under the lens
- herpes virus
- bacteria, fungi or parasites
- reusing or topping off contact lens solution

Contact lens infection symptoms

Symptoms of contact lens-related infections include:

- blurry vision
- unusual redness of the eye



- pain in the eye
- tearing or discharge from the eye
- being extra sensitive to light
- feeling like there is something in your eye

Some contact lens-related eye infections can cause serious vision loss or even blindness. If you have any of these symptoms, it is important to see your eye doctor as soon as possible.

6 steps to avoid contact lens infections

RUB. Rub lenses when cleaning them.

Wash your hands before cleaning your contacts. Place the lens in your clean palm with fresh, store-bought solution. Rubbing the lens as you clean it loosens the protein and bacteria that

builds up. Even if your solution says “No Rub,” you should do it anyway. Studies have proven that rubbing the lenses is one of the best ways to avoid eye infections.

RINSE. Rinse lenses in store-bought solution.

Always rinse and store your contact lenses in store-bought solution. Homemade saline contains dangerous germs that can blind you.

REPLACE. Replace your contact lens case with a new one at least three times per year.

REST. From time to time, give your eyes a break from your contact lenses. Also, never sleep in your contact lenses. That makes it much more likely for you to get an eye infection.

RENEW. Get new lenses when recommended.

Don't try to extend the life of your contacts by wearing them too long. Only keep lenses as long as your prescriber recommends. For example, one-month contact lenses should only be used for 30 days after opening the package.

RESERVE. Make and keep an appointment with your ophthalmologist to keep your eyes healthy. Your ophthalmologist is committed to protecting your sight.

Summary

Contact lenses are used to correct vision without glasses. If contact lenses are not cared for properly, you risk getting an eye infection.

Symptoms of contact-lens related infections include blurry vision, eye redness and light sensitivity. If you have any of these symptoms, call your ophthalmologist.

If you have any questions about your eyes or your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

Get more information about contact lenses from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at aao.org/contacts-link.

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