

Optometry Department

Advice for parents of children wearing contact lenses

This leaflet aims to help you understand the reason your child has been prescribed contact lenses and to inform you of what to expect from contact lens wear.

Why does my child need to wear contact lenses?

Children are prescribed contact lenses when they have a high amount of long-sightedness or short-sightedness in one or both eyes which would be difficult to correct with spectacles. This may be a problem your child has been born with, or it may be the result of eye surgery, for example, after having cataracts removed.

What are the benefits of contact lens wear?

A contact lens will give the eye a clear image which will help visual development and encourage better vision. Remaining without refractive correction will increase the risk of a lazy eye or reduced vision later in life.

Is my child too young for contact lenses?

Contact lenses can be used in children of all ages, even new born babies. To ensure contact lens wear is safe, parents or guardians must be able to insert, remove, clean and handle the contact lenses on behalf of their child until the child is old enough to do this by themselves.

What are the risks of contact lens wear?

Everybody who wears contact lenses are at a higher risk of eye infections compared to those who do not wear them. The risk is increased if the lenses are left in the eye during sleeping. For every 10,000 people wearing contact lenses on a daily basis, 4 people will have serious eye infection within one year. If soft contact lenses are worn on an extended basis, i.e., during the night and day, the risk of serious eye infection increases to 25 people out of 10,000 within one year.

Serious eye infections are painful and may cause permanently reduced vision. Very rarely such infections can cause blindness and even the loss of an eye. It is important for parents' of children who wear contact lenses to be aware of the risks of contact lens wear.



Patient Information

Serious eye infections can still occur despite every effort to clean and care for contact lenses. If contact lenses are not cleaned and cared for properly the risk of infection is much higher.

To minimise the chance of serious infection, contact lenses and contact lens cases should be cleaned and replaced on a regular basis. Hands should be washed with soap and water and thoroughly dried before handling the contact lens. Tap water should not be allowed to touch the contact lens at any time.

Can my child go swimming?

Swimming pools, hot tubs and Jacuzzis contain many organisms that can cause serious eye infections in contact lens wearers. In particular, an organism named *acanthamoeba* is known to live in water and can cause very painful, sight-threatening eye infections. Therefore we do not recommend that your child wears contact lenses when swimming.

Who will supply the contact lenses?

An optometrist will assess your child's eyes and discuss the benefits and disadvantages of contact lens wear with you. Finding a contact lens that fits the eye well may take several visits. Contact lenses will only be issued to wear outside of the clinic once the parent/guardian is confident at inserting, removing and handling the contact lens without the help of the optometrist.

Contact lens appointments will initially be on a very regular basis, although time between appointments will be extended as contact lens wear becomes established.

Are there different types of contact lenses?

Lenses can be broadly categorised into two groups; soft and rigid contact lenses. Both types of contact lens can be used for children, however most children are fitted with soft contact lenses. Soft lenses are made from flexible gel-like material that is wet to the touch.

Charges and exemptions

There is no charge for contact lenses supplied to children under 16 years of age. However, if contact lenses are continually lost or damaged, or if a spare set of contact lenses are required, the hospital may charge you £57.00 per lens.

What do I do in the event of a problem?

If you are concerned that;

- your child's contact lens is unusually uncomfortable
- your child has a sticky, itchy or red eye
- your child's complains of photophobia (sensitivity to light) or soreness

Patient Information

Please remove the contact lens straight away and contact the department for advice.

Contact Details:

- **Optometry Department** tel. 024 7696 6516 Monday to Friday 9.00am-4.00pm
- **UHCW Eye Casualty (Clinic 9)Tel 024 7696 6627**
Open from:
Monday to Thursday 08.30am – 4.30pm
Friday 08.30am – 4.00pm
Saturday 08.30am – 12.00pm
- **Main Accident & Emergency at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire**, outside hours an on-call doctor will be available.

References

The incidence of contact lens-related microbial keratitis in Australia.(2008) Stapleton F., Keay L., Edwards, K., et al., Ophthalmology, 115 (10) 1655-62

The incidence of contact lens- related microbial keratitis in Australia. (2005) Stapleton, F., Edwards, K., Keay, L., et al., Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci 46 Abstract no. 5025

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact the department and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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Document History

Author	Sally Blackmore-Wright / Laura Sanders / Vishal Thakrar
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Published	December 2012
Reviewed	January 2014, July 2016, August 2018
Review Date	August 2020
Version	4
Reference	HIC/LFT/1556/12