

CONTACT LENSES

Q Why do people choose contact lenses instead of spectacles?

A People wear contact lenses for various reasons. Contact lenses may give better vision than spectacles For some visual conditions such as severe shortsightedness, longsightedness or corneal distortion, or after cataract removal.

Some people like the wider field of view given by contact lenses as side vision is not blocked by spectacle frames. Contact lenses do not 'fog up' with changes in temperature or from perspiration and they are unaffected by rain.

Many people choose contact lenses because they think glasses make them look less attractive or they find spectacles annoying. Sports players and people involved in vigorous activities often find contact lenses more convenient than spectacles, especially for water sports and contact sports.

Q Can anyone wear contact lenses?

A Modern technological advances have made it possible for more people to wear contact lenses successfully. However, contact lenses suit some people better than others. Eye diseases or injuries, certain visual defects or unstable amounts or types of tear fluid all work against unsuccessful contact lens wear. Environmental factors such as dust, or dry conditions—for example, air conditioned offices—may make contact lens wear more difficult. The best way of assessing whether you can wear contact lenses is to discuss it with your optometrist.

Q What are the disadvantages of contact lens wear?

A Successful contact lens wear requires continual effort on the part of the wearer. It is not like going out and buying a new pair of slues. The lenses must be cleaned and disinfected regularly and periodic optometric check-ups are necessary. There are ongoing costs involved in contact lens wear. Contact lenses cannot simply be bought taken away and used—contact lens wear involves regular attention.

Q Are contact lenses expensive?

A There are three aspects to consider when assessing the total outlay for contact lenses—the cost of the lenses, the cost of maintenance and the cost of the consultations for the prescription and fitting, delivery of the lenses and after-care of your eyes.

The cost of contact lenses varies considerably depending on the type of lenses. It depends on your eye condition and whether special designs or tints are prescribed. The optical ancillary cover available from private health insurance funds often includes a rebate for contact lenses.

Contact lens consultation fees are covered by Medicare only in certain circumstances, in other cases optometrists are free to set their own fees. Some may charge one comprehensive fee to cover all contact lens consultations over a certain period; others may charge a fee for each visit. Whether or not you are covered by Medicare, your optometrist will discuss all costs with you before ordering any lenses.

Q Can contact lenses be made from a spectacle prescription?

A No. A thorough vision examination is essential for proper prescription and fitting of contact lenses. The contact lens examination includes measurement of the corneal size and shape, pupil size and eyelid contour. Contact lenses are prescribed to meet individual requirements.

Q What types of contact lenses are available?

A Most contact lenses fall into one of two groups: hard lenses which are usually made of rigid gas-permeable plastic and cover only part of the cornea, and soft lenses which are made of a very soft and flexible water-absorbing material which conforms closely to the eye shape.

The time taken to become accustomed to wearing the different lens types varies from person to person.

People usually adapt to soft lenses in a few days but it can take several weeks to adapt to hard lenses. The soft lenses are larger and more difficult to dislodge than hard lenses and are often worn by sports players for this

reason.

In general, contact lenses need to be replaced every six to 18 months, depending on the care they are given. Before recommending the lens type best for you, your optometrist will consider the health of your eyes, your vision problems, the type of work you do and your hobbies.

Q What are disposable contact lenses?

A 'Disposable' or 'Frequent replacement' contact lenses are designed to be discarded after being worn for only a few weeks. Although these disposable lenses may cost more per year than a pair of non-disposable lenses, they require less maintenance and save the wearer some of the cost of cleaning solutions. Your optometrist will discuss with you whether conventional or frequent replacement lenses are best for you.

Q Can I wear contact lenses all the time?

A Both hard and soft contact lenses need to be renewed, cleaned and disinfected every day. These procedures are simple. Cleaning involves removing tear deposits and other foreign particles which adhere to the lens and could harm the eye. Disinfection is necessary to kill micro-organisms which can cause infections. Your optometrist will explain how to clean and disinfect your lenses.

A Some lenses may be worn overnight occasionally. Your optometrist will advise you about this. It is important to follow your optometrist's advice because wearing inappropriate lenses overnight is a major cause of problems for contact lens wearers.

Q Can contact lenses damage my eyes?

A Contact lenses will not damage your eyes if you follow the instructions given by your optometrist and you clean and disinfect the lenses regularly. Sometimes a problem can arise without you being aware of it, so regular consultations are essential. If you think you have a problem or your eyes appear red or sore you should consult your optometrist immediately.

Successful contact lens wear depends not only on your optometrist's skill in precisely fitting the lenses, but also on your own willingness to devote time to care of the lenses and regular follow-up examinations.

Ask your optometrist for these related brochures

- Safe contact lens wear
- Contact lens fees explained

This brochure is produced by the Australian Optometrical Association in the interest of the visual welfare of the Australian people.

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