

## The New Contact Lens Wearer's Survival Guide

Welcome to Contact Lenses! The purpose of this handout is to assist you in adjusting to your new lenses, learning how to get them in and out and also to inform you on proper lens wear and care. Contact lenses are medical devices and this is why they require a prescription to obtain them. Just as you are not to share prescription medicine with someone other than yourself, you shouldn't be sharing your lenses with others. These lenses are carefully selected to properly fit your eyes, and if placed on the wrong eye, permanent damage to the eye can occur. Just like the old saying, "if the shoe fits, wear it," a proper fit that is comfortable is what we are looking for, and that is the doctor's goal. After all, think of what happens to your foot when your shoe doesn't fit. It's not comfortable, and you can get blisters, infections, and even hammer toes. Ouch! Hammer toes aside, in your eyes, an improper fit can develop contact lens discomfort, red eyes, infections, and ulcers which can lead to loss of vision.

Another highly debated issue in contact lens wear is whether or not it is safe to sleep in contact lenses. Some people blame it on being lazy, while some don't feel confident with taking the lenses in or out, and others don't like the fact that they can't see the alarm clock in the morning. I say, "Sleeping in your contacts will not make your dreams any clearer," but if you find that you are doing this, or are planning on doing this, it can be done safely if you are wearing contact lenses that are approved for this type of extended wear. These lenses are made of materials that allow much more oxygen through than standard materials. Why is this important? Well you wouldn't go to sleep with a plastic bag over your head now would you? Of course not, because you wouldn't be able to breathe. Well then why would you even think about doing that to your eye? Your eye, especially your cornea, needs lots of oxygen to remain healthy and keep you to seeing clearly.

How should you clean your lenses? Use a name brand solution. The "No Rub" is great, but be sure to soak them for at least 6 hours and rinse them thoroughly. The longer you wear a contact lens, and the less you clean it, the higher the risk you have for developing an eye infection. Contact lenses today are not to be worn for over one month without replacing them with a fresh new pair. Studies have shown that the optimal lens replacement schedule for soft contact lenses is every 2 weeks. Prolonged wear leads to a lens becoming warped, scratched and dirty. Protein, from your tears, can gather as deposits on the lens surface. The scratches and proteins cause a once smooth contact lens surface to become rough and full of micro-deposits. This now rough surface will irritate the lining of your eye lids with every blink, causing Giant Papillary Conjunctivitis (GPC) which can make all contact lenses feel uncomfortable, like a gritty, sand-like feeling in your eyes. GPC is similar to having little blisters develop on the lining of your eye, and they are not easy to get rid of. Ouch! So please, wear the lenses as directed.

So that being said, that brings us to the Golden Rule of Contact Lens Wear. **If while wearing your contact lenses, your eyes do not look good, feel good, or see well, remove the contact lenses immediately. If the irritation does not get better within a couple hours, you must discontinue contact lens wear and get to the eye doctor so that he or she could evaluate your eye for an infection and give you the proper medicine to clear it up so that you can return to contact lens wear.** If an infection develops, you may be kept out of your lenses for up to a month! Now if you are thinking, "How on Earth would I be able to get along without my contacts...I should have bought some glasses!" My point exactly. Every contact lens wearer needs to have a back up pair of glasses for emergencies like this, and also to give your eyes a break from contact lenses every once in a while.

These little pieces of plastic are amazing, and they will continue to amaze you with their clear and comfortable vision as long as you don't abuse them. So what is good lens care? Remove and clean them nightly with a name brand solution, wear the lens no longer than it's recommended wear time, and most importantly, **see your Optometrist every year for a check up.**

## **INSERTION OF CONTACT LENSES**

Patience is a great virtue, and you are going to need it the first couple days, as inserting these slippery, floppy, virtually invisible lenses is probably going to be the most challenging aspect of the whole process. After all, it took the doctor himself about 15 minutes every morning to get them in when he was learning. So, let's get to it. It's easiest to learn sitting down with a mirror in front of you. You are going to want to wash your hands with soap and water and dry them with a lint free towel before you handle contact lenses. If you have long nails, you may need to trim your nails, especially your index finger and thumb nail. Before opening the peel top package, make sure you know which lens power goes with each eye. I have seen numerous methods of inserting lenses. You will find a way that works best for you, but to learn, you will need to do a couple key things. So follow this set of instructions; (Assuming you are right handed or can work with your right index finger)

- 1.) Open the contact lens package intended for your right eye, and scoop out the lens with the light blue handling tint, most easily done by using the tip of your index finger.
- 2.) Position the lens to sit up on the very tip of your right index finger so that it looks like a bowl or a taco shell with the edges curled inward. If the edges look flared outward like the rim of a vase, then turn it inside out, as it is upside down. It will do no harm if you insert it upside down, but it will feel as if it is moving around with every blink.
- 3.) A tip here would be to keep your right index finger, beneath the lens, dry, and then to place a drop of solution in the center of the lens. This will help it transfer from your finger to your eye easier.
- 4.) The most important aspect to inserting a lens is your grip on the eyelids. Your eyelashes will act like goalies, trying to swat out that contact, as it is your natural instinct to blink. So, you will have to pin back your upper and lower lashes while stretching your lids open and not blocking your view of what you are doing. The best method for learning is the two middle finger grip. To insert the lens in the right eye, with the lens on your right index finger; Take your left middle finger and pin back the right upper lashes. Do not block your left eye's view when you do this, and try to primarily look through your left eye as you insert the lens in the right eye. Next grasp the lower lashes with your right middle finger. Stretch those lids apart, and then bring in the lens slowly, coming in parallel to the colored part of your eye and not angling up or down. Slowly and gently, touch the lens onto your eye, aiming for the colored part of your eye. Will yourself not to blink, and don't roll your eyes. Once you think you have it on, let go of your lower lid first, look down, and then very gently close your eye. Do not squeeze your lids here as an air bubble may exist upon insertion and your lids will pop that lens right off. Once you got it in, exhale, and smile! You did it. Only one more to go! Remember that if you are wearing Toric lenses to correct your astigmatism, it may take a couple blinks for the lens to position correctly. You can help the lens get to the correct position faster if you position the vertical line to go at the 6 o'clock position on your eye.

## **REMOVAL OF SOFT CONTACT LENSES**

This is the easiest part for most, so breathe a sigh of relief. Most people are able to simply pinch the lens off using the pads of your index finger and thumb. Easier said than done right? You are going to want to be looking into a mirror. The lens sits on the cornea which is over the colored part of your eye. You will take the same grip as you did when you inserted the lens. Try not to roll your eyes when you are reaching in there. You are going to have to pinch the lens with your thumb and index finger to wrinkle it, and then grab it and remove it. If you are having trouble with that, try touching the contact with your index finger, and rolling it down below the colored part of your eye, and then once wrinkled, blink really hard and it should come out.

Always use new solution every night, and wash out your case with soap and water every week or two. If you have problems with Insertion and Removal of your contact lenses, you are always welcome to come into our office for a little help. Be patient with learning, as you will get it soon, and you will one day laugh at yourself at how difficult it first was to learn how to put the lenses in, and take them out. Doesn't it feel good to get rid of those glasses! Good Luck!