

# Contact Lenses FAQ

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### Who can wear contact lenses?

Contact lenses can be worn by just about everybody to correct just about any eye condition. They can correct both near-sightedness and far-sightedness, as well as [astigmatism](#) and [presbyopia](#). Contact lenses can even be worn by people who don't need vision correction, but who simply want to change their eye color.

### At what age can you start wearing contact lenses?

That largely depends on how responsible you are. Contacts have frequently been used with premature infants, who sometimes have vision problems. With proper care and maintenance, people of all ages can wear contacts safely and effectively.

### How much is this going to cost me?

The price of contact lenses can vary greatly. If you have a difficult prescription or need correction for problems like astigmatism, contact lenses can be fairly expensive. However, if you have no special requirements, the cost will be significantly cheaper. It really depends on the type of contacts you buy. [Daily disposables](#) can be quite pricey; oxygen permeables provide a better value. While initially more expensive, oxygen permeables can last for years and are inexpensive to care for. They can also accommodate any prescription, no matter how difficult, because they are custom-made for each individual wearer.

## **Are contact lenses difficult to take care of?**

It varies from lens to lens. Oxygen permeable contacts, need daily cleaning and disinfecting but generally no enzyming, since their slick surface resists deposit buildup. Daily disposable lenses are worn once, then discarded, with no maintenance required. [Weekly soft disposables](#) are cleaned at the end of the day, then soaked in disinfecting solution until they're worn again. Since they're discarded before deposit buildups occur, they don't need to be soaked in an enzyme solution. Other soft lenses however, usually require daily cleaning/disinfection and weekly enzyming.

## **This won't hurt much, will it?**

Many people have a fear of putting foreign objects in their eyes. For the most part, that's a healthy thing; it keeps them from poking them out. Unfortunately, it also prevents them from trying contact lenses. Most first time wearers are surprised with the level of comfort that contact lenses provide. Initial contact lens fittings by professional eye care specialists can minimize or eliminate any irritation associated with new lenses. After a brief adjustment period, most people report they can no longer feel contact lenses on their eyes.

## **Can I use contact lenses while playing sports?**

Yes, in fact most sports medicine specialists recommend them over [eyeglasses](#). They can enhance visual skills like depth perception, peripheral awareness, and eye-hand/eye-foot coordination. And unlike glasses, contacts offer athletes a competitive advantage because they stay in place more easily and provide a wider vision field. Contact lenses also make it easy to wear protective goggles.

## **Should I shell out extra cash for disposable contact lenses?**

Many doctors highly recommend both disposable and frequent replacement contact lenses: they pose a lower health risk because there's less chance for protein and bacteria to build up on them.

## **Can I sleep in my contact lenses?**

It depends on the type of lens you're wearing, the composition of your tear film, your general eye health, and various other factors. Oxygen permeable contact lenses and certain soft lenses can be slept in, but always be sure to check with your eye care professional first.

## **Can I store contact lenses in tap water?**

No. Soft lenses must be stored in a disinfecting solution. Temporary storage in saline is allowed, but the lenses will have to be disinfected prior to the next use. RGP lenses can be stored in tap water in an emergency, but will need to be cleaned and conditioned by soaking in an appropriate disinfecting solution prior to use.

## **Can I lose a lens behind my eye?**

No. There is nowhere for it to go. The conjunctiva, the fine, thin membrane that covers the sclera (white part) and inside of your eyelids is well attached to the side walls of the eye socket. Although you can not lose a lens it can find its way up and under the upper lid and be pretty hard to locate. A soft lens can roll up and likewise be hard to find. Either way, if you flush your eye with water or saline, the lens should float out. In rare instances, a RGP lens may adhere by suction to the conjunctiva. First apply wetting solution to the lens and wait about a minute. Then try to move the lens while gently pressing on one edge. If that doesn't work, you can try to very gently lift up under one edge to break the seal. Or go see your eye doctor. If a contact lens adheres repeatedly, it is not fitted correctly and should be replaced.

## **How can I tell if I have the lens in the wrong eye?**

Alternately cover each eye with your hand. Do not simply squeeze your lids closed. Compare the vision. If one eye is noticeably better or worse, switch them and try again.

## **How can I tell if a soft lens is inside out?**

Here are three methods. Not all work for all lenses. (1) Place the lens on the tip of your finger facing upward, like a bowl. If when viewed from the side the edges of the bowl flare outward, it's inside out. (2) Add saline, drop by drop to fill the bowl. If the edges begin to curl inwards, it's the correct way. (3) Place the lens on the crease in your hand just below your pinkie. This is sometimes called the "life line or heart line". Make sure the lens is centered over the crease. As you curl your fingers inward to close your hand, the edges of the lens should roll inwards to form a "soft taco". This is the correct position.

## **My lens has a very small chip or tear in the edge but it doesn't bother me. Should I replace it anyway?**

Absolutely. Never, never wear a lens that is obviously damaged, even if it feels all right. It could be causing damage to your eyes that might not be immediately apparent. And never wear a lens which is uncomfortable, causes pain or leaves your vision hazy or distorted.

## **How do I know when to dispose of disposable contact lenses? They seem to be OK longer than I expected.**

As a basic rule, never sleep in lenses more than one week, or less, as prescribed by your doctor. Dispose of them as recommended. Daily wear users should replace their lenses as recommended by their eye care practitioner. Wearing your lenses past the recommended replacement interval may result in serious complications affecting your eye health and vision. Disposable lenses are meant to be discarded at regular intervals.

## **My eyes get dry. What kind of eye drops can I use?**

You should use products specifically designed for use with the type of lens you are wearing. Saline solution can be used with any contact lens. The re-wetting drops for RGP lenses are far more effective than saline and special soft lens lubricating drops also work well. Drink more water to help with increasing your natural tear production. Unless directed to do so by your eye doctor, do not use medicated eye drops, including "get the red out" brands with contact lenses. Soft lenses may concentrate the drug and alter the effect. The lens itself may be damaged.

## **I used to make my own saline. Is there a problem with that?**

Yes. Home prepared saline is not sterile and there is the risk of bacterial or parasitic contamination. Although extremely rare, the resulting infection can be so damaging that it simply is not worth the risk.

## **There are so many solutions out there, how do I know which is best?**

Rule one: Do not "mix and match" contact lens products. The chemicals used within any one care system are designed to be compatible. Using alternative products could create chemical reactions which could damage or discolor the lenses, irritate your eyes, or reduce the desired effect of the product. Unless you're a chemist, don't do it.

Rule two: When it comes to saline, you have a choice between unpreserved and preserved products. Unpreserved is preferable, and if your system requires unpreserved, that's what you use. Within each of those categories (preserved or unpreserved), choose the least expensive. Saline is saline: salt in sterile, distilled water with a few buffers added.

Note: Be careful to keep your lens care products clean. Do not touch the tip of the bottles to any surface. If you do, quickly discard the next few drops. Always close the container with the original top immediately after use.

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