

Don't risk your eyes!

Incorrect use and care of contact lenses is the leading cause of eye infections in Singapore.

By Dr Elaine Chee, Ophthalmologist

Every day in Singapore, at least one contact lens wearer develops a cornea infection. In fact, contaminated contact lenses account for 60% of all eye infection cases in Singapore. Most contact lens users wear them to correct myopia, but increasingly, young people are wearing coloured contact lenses for cosmetic reasons. Instead of buying from reputable sources, many people buy these lenses online as they are usually much cheaper. Because they are mass produced, these contact lenses may not fit well, and may also have a lower oxygen permeability, which can lead to serious cornea infections.



A matter of professional advice

What people fail to recognise is that contact lenses are actually medical devices that come into direct contact with the eye and should therefore be fitted by an eyecare professional who will assess if you have dry eyes, allergies or any eye infection before determining if you are suited to wearing contact lenses. Improper usage and care can potentially lead to complications that can lead to blindness. Good lens hygiene and care are important to prevent corneal infections and other contact lens-related complications.

Do's and don'ts of lens care

Do

1. Wash your hands before handling your contact lenses.
2. Clean and disinfect your contact lenses after each use. Rub the lenses for about 10 seconds to remove any debris that may have adhered to the surface of the lenses.
3. Clean and air-dry the contact lens case at least once a week, or daily, if possible.
4. Replace your contact lens case every three to six months.
5. Have your eyes checked by an eyecare professional every six months to a year to ensure you have not developed any complications such as allergies to the lenses.
6. Use saline or artificial tears prior to removal of the contact lenses, especially if you have worn

them for many hours. Forceful removal of contact lenses which have adhered to your cornea surface may lead to tearing of the lenses or scratches on the cornea.

Don't

1. Keep your contact lenses on overnight.
2. Use contact lenses beyond the expiry date as there may be an increase in bacteria load.
3. Wash contact lenses in tap water as bugs that cause serious eye infections are present in tap water.
4. Reuse your contact lens solutions.
5. Use damaged lenses as the rough edges may result in abrasions on the cornea and increase the risk of infection.
6. Wear lenses while swimming as this increases the risk of contamination by harmful microorganisms. Should you absolutely need to, daily disposable lenses are a better alternative.
7. Wear lenses if there is any discomfort, redness or blurry vision. This could be a sign of an early infection or over-wearing of contact lenses, and persisting in wearing them could worsen the infection.

Do consult an eyecare professional early if you develop any sign of redness, discomfort, discharge or blurring of vision with the use of contact lenses. Early detection could save your sight.



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