



Dear

Wearing contact lenses is a great way to enjoy clear vision without having to wear glasses. Despite the advances in materials, wearing contact lenses still involves some risk. You should review these and be prepared to care for your lenses properly in order to minimize these risks prior to deciding to continue with contact lens wear.

The largest risk when dealing with contact lenses involves the possibility of infection. We have natural bacteria and organisms that live on our skin every day. When we touch our eyes or contact lenses we are putting these potential pathogens directly into our eyes. This could lead to an infection. Infectious organisms can cause a variety of problems from a minor conjunctivitis (inflammation of the protective front lining of the eye) to a vision threatening corneal ulcer (destroyed tissue in the center part of your vision). There are two pathogens in particular that are concerning with contact lens wearers, these are *Acanthamoeba* and *Pseudomonas*. Both of these bugs can cause a serious corneal ulcer within 24 hours. Even with quick and proper treatment these organisms can leave you with vision blocking scar tissue. In addition, virus and otherwise generally mild bacterial such as *staph.* strains are more likely to cause an infection in a contact lens wearer. This is because contact lenses interfere with the normal oxygen consumption and cleaning mechanisms of the eye.

While this seems scary and may deter you from wanting to try lenses, there are a few simple steps that will go a long way toward healthy contact lens wear. First, preventing infection should be the contact lens wearer's goal. This can be done through careful hand washing and proper cleaning of your contact lenses. Washing your hands for a minimum of 1 minute with warm water eliminates the majority of germs from your hands. Think your doing this already? Next time you wash your hands, count out 60 seconds and see how long that feels. Most of us do not wash for the full amount of time needed. A good trick is to sing Mary Had A Little Lamb two times over. Next, be sure you are using a clean, lint-free towel to dry your hands. Use this same towel to turn off your water so as not to touch the dirty faucet handles with your now clean hands.

Cleaning your contacts is the second simple step you can take to prevent infection. Your doctor has been bombarded with information from sales representatives and solution companies telling her all about the pros and cons of solutions. She has waded through that information for you and has determined the best choice for your eyes. Don't ignore that good advice.

Your recommended solution is: _____.

Also, rubbing your contacts with clean hands significantly reduces the number of germs on the contact lens surface. In addition to rubbing, be sure to change your solution every night. Solution has a cleaning span of about 8 hours. After that it the ability to kill bacteria drops significantly.

Next, avoid wearing your contact lenses in hot tubs or pools. *Acanthamoeba* and *Pseudomonas* are abundant in hot, standing water. Wearing contacts in these environments is unsafe. Just don't do it. If you do wear your contacts, be sure to remove them immediately when finished and clean them with good quality solution, allowing them to stand in solution for the minimum specified time on the bottle (usually 6 to 8 hours).

Finally, the most important thing that you can do to keep your lenses clean is to replace them when your doctor has recommended.

Replace every _____.

Your doctor has seen the surface of your contact lens under high magnification and can see the amount of build up on the lens. He or she then recommends a wear schedule that will allow you the best value without compromising your health. Trying to "stretch" your lenses longer than prescribed means that the surface of your lens is not as clean as it should be and the risk of infection goes up significantly. In fact, this was found to be the leading risk factor for contact lens associated infections.

In summary, contact lenses can be a safe and convenient supplement (not replacement) to glasses when properly cared for and maintained.

*****If you notice increased redness, pain or change in your vision, remove your contact lenses immediately and call Aris Eye Care at (989) 287-4566. If this is after hours, please call Dr. Aris directly at (231)580-9665.**