

IACLE Position Statement on COVID-19 pandemic and contact lens use

The global outbreak of the Coronavirus disease COVID-19 has raised questions about the safety of contact lens wear during the pandemic, the precautions that patients should take when handling and wearing contact lenses, and what would constitute best clinical practice by eye care professionals.

Contact lens educators need to be prepared to answer these questions and provide reliable information. While reports in the literature on COVID-19 and contact lenses are still emerging, there are sensible precautions that patients and eye care professionals can adopt at this time.

With nearly 950 members in 79 countries, IACLE plays an important role in promoting the safe use of contact lenses worldwide. Here we summarize the key points and measures to consider based on current evidence.

Key Points

- There is currently no evidence to suggest an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 through contact lens wear compared to spectacle lens wear.
- There is no evidence that contact lens wearers who are asymptomatic should cease contact lens wear due to an increased risk of developing COVID-19.
- Contact lens practitioners should remind patients of the key lens-care behaviors which will minimize the likelihood of infection or inflammatory events.
- Practitioners should consider how they can best continue to manage their contact lens patients if access to local clinical care has been reduced.

Measures for contact lens wearers

- All wearers: wash your hands thoroughly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds then dry with a paper towel, especially before every lens application and removal. Avoid direct contact of water with your contact lenses.

- All wearers: avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- All wearers: dispose of your lenses to the recommended schedule (eg every day, every two weeks or every month).
- All wearers: discontinue wear if you are unwell, especially with any cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Users of reusable contact lenses: thoroughly clean and disinfect your lenses each day with the care products recommended by your contact lens practitioner.
- Users of reusable contact lenses: clean your storage case daily and replace regularly.

Measures for clinicians

- Follow the advice of your national regulatory body or professional organization.
- Reschedule non-urgent appointments.
- Reschedule new contact lens fitting appointments.
- Reduce physical contact with patients.
- Use approved personal protection equipment, as appropriate.
- Disinfect contact lens equipment and trial sets.
- Emphasize the importance of hand hygiene and fully compliant lens wear.
- Monitor all staff for signs of the virus.
- Maintain social distancing where possible.
- Consider new management strategies and referral pathways where clinical care provision is reduced.
- Actively minimize the impact on the wider healthcare service.
- Remain alert to new findings as they emerge.

Useful References

Fonn D and Jones L. Hand hygiene is linked to microbial keratitis and corneal inflammatory events. *Cont Lens Anterior Eye* 2020;42:2 132-135.

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Lai THT, Tang EWH, Chau SKY, Fung KSC and Li KKW. Stepping up infection control measures in ophthalmology during the novel coronavirus outbreak: an experience from Hong Kong. *Graefes Arch Clin Exp Ophthalmol* 2020 March 3. DOI: 10.1007/s00417-020-04641-8. [Epub

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Zeri F and Naroo SA. Contact lens practice in the time of COVID-19. Cont Lens Anterior Eye 2020 March 19. DOI: 10.1016/j.clae.2020.03.00. [Epub ahead of print].

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Last updated 26 March 2020