Fast Facts

Who Uses Contact Lenses

- More than 30 million people in the U.S. wear contact lenses\(^1\),\(^2\).
- Two-thirds of contact lens wearers are female\(^2\).
- The average age of contact lens wearers worldwide is 31 years old\(^3\).
- Ten percent of contact lens wearers are under 18 years old, 15% are between ages 18-24, 50% are between ages 25-44, and 25% are age 45 or older\(^2\).

Contact Lenses in the U.S.

- Contact lenses are medical devices and are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act\(^4\).
- Rigid, or hard, contact lenses made from plastic were first produced in the U.S. between 1938-1940\(^5\).
- Soft contact lenses were first introduced to the U.S. in 1971\(^6\).
- Eighty percent of contact lens wearers use soft contact lenses\(^2\).

Benefits of Contact Lens Use

- People can use many different methods to improve their vision, and no single method is the best solution for everyone. Contact lenses are one of several effective options.
- Contact lenses can help people see better without affecting their appearance or interfering with many sports and activities.
- Some children and teens report feeling dramatically better about their appearance when wearing contact lenses\(^7\),\(^8\).
- Compared to wearing glasses, children switching to contact lenses reported significant improvements in the areas of perceived appearance, participation in activities, and satisfaction with vision correction\(^8\).

http://www.cdc.gov/contactlenses/fast-facts.html

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Specially designed contact lenses can improve the ability to focus and temporarily reduce poor distance vision (near-sightedness) in certain contact lens wearers.\(^4\)\(^9\).

### Complications & Risk Factors

- Serious eye infections that can lead to blindness affect up to 1 out of every 500 contact lens users per year.\(^10\)
- Not following proper contact lens care instructions has been linked to outbreaks of serious eye infections.\(^11\)
- Between 40\%-90\% of contact lens wearers do not properly follow the care instructions for their contact lenses.\(^12\)
- Improper cleaning and irregular replacement of contact lenses and contact lens cases—as well as other behaviors relating to contact lens hygiene and care—have been linked to a higher risk of complications.\(^12\)\(^-\)\(^14\)
- Keratitis—a painful eye infection often linked to improper contact lens use—leads to 1 million doctor and hospital visits annually, at a cost of $175 million to the US healthcare system.\(^15\)

### Prevention

Keep your eyes healthy while wearing contact lenses by following these tips, and always be sure to carry a pair of glasses with you—just in case you have to take out your contact lenses.

### References

1. FDA. Looking good: safe use and care of contact lenses (May 2010). ([http://www.fda.gov/forhealthprofessionals/articlesofinterest/ucm211838.htm](http://www.fda.gov/forhealthprofessionals/articlesofinterest/ucm211838.htm)) 2010
6. Epstein, A.B. In the aftermath of the *Fusarium* keratitis outbreak: What have we learned?  


