



cornea &
contact lens
SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Position Statement

Contact Lens Wear & COVID-19

There's currently no evidence to suggest an increased risk of being infected with SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the disease known as COVID-19, through contact lens (CL) wear.

For decades contact lens practitioners have advised thorough, correct hand-washing and strict hygiene practices for CL wearers in order to decrease the risk of eye infections. There is however a history of a significant degree of non-compliance with proper hygiene techniques among CL wearers, and the general public at large. Now more than ever it is critically important for a CL wearer to pay great attention to proper hygiene and for practitioners to strongly reinforce sound practices. This can be done at the time of consultation, or via Social Media, webinars, text messages, websites, email etc.

Contact Lens Wear is a safe activity with low rates of infections or other serious complications, despite poor compliance with safe practices.

Contact lenses, solutions and eye drops (where applicable) should be used, worn and replaced as prescribed by your eye care practitioner and according to manufacturer recommendations and expiry dates. Storage case hygiene and care practices should be followed for reusable lenses.

Where possible, Daily Disposable Contact Lenses are advised as they improve compliance and reduce risks of complications in lens wear.

Cease Contact Lens Wear if Sick.

Practitioners have long advised against the wear of contact lenses if a wearer is unwell. This applies in particular to any signs or symptoms of colds and flu, respiratory tract infections, red sore eyes, discharge and so on. Basically, if someone is feeling unwell they should terminate contact lens wear.

For healthy individuals, normal contact lens wear can be maintained.

This advice has been around since long before COVID-19 but is even more critical now. Public health organisations and government health officials are releasing information to ensure that people receive the right advice, care and support regarding COVID-19.

There are those with severe eye conditions who cannot function without contact lenses and cannot see with spectacles or while unaided. These wearers should liaise with their practitioner if unwell and seek specific advice to reduce risk of complications.

Please follow our latest updates via our Facebook page.

Advice for Contact Lens Wear & Care

In summary current advice is;

- **Contact lens wear is safe and can be maintained by healthy individuals.**
- **Contact lens wear does not appear to increase the risk of developing COVID-19, compared to spectacle lens wearers, or those with normal vision who do not need any corrective devices. To date there is no known research suggesting any such link or risk.**
- **It should also be noted that contact lenses provided by leading manufactures are manufactured in sterile conditions and the lenses are safe to wear. The majority of contact lenses provided on the market are in a state ready for wear. Customised lenses should be disinfected before use.**
- **Contact Lenses obtained from dubious sources, including counterfeit lenses and those offered through unlicensed premises and providers should be avoided as these may not be sterile or safe to wear.**
- **Always seek professional advice and consult with your eye care provider. In these troubled times it may be best to call ahead before making an appointment.**
- **In case of emergency visit your nearest eye hospital or clinic.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, face, nose and lips as far as possible and avoid eye rubbing.**
- **There are a few basic messages we can apply to contact lenses.**
 - **Your eyes should 'Look Good', 'See Good' and 'Feel Good'.**
 - **If in doubt, take them out and seek professional assistance.**

Proper Handwashing: A Cornerstone of Safe Contact Lens Wear

Thoroughly WASH HANDS before;

- **Handling Contact Lenses and CL cases.**
- **Applying contact lenses, even for brand new lenses direct from the pack. The aim is to prevent spreading any nasty pathogens (bugs, bacteria, fungi, viruses etc) from hands or fingers to the lens and therefore the eye.**
- **The same applies to removing contact lenses from the eye.**

Whether an optometrist, ophthalmologist, dispensing optician, assistant, technician or contact lens wearer, the importance of basic hand washing and hygiene with contact lenses is critically important and cannot be stressed enough!

Some further CCLSA lens care guidelines can be found [HERE](#).

Additional information regarding safe contact lens care at [this link](#).

There are many strong messages from numerous health organisations around the world that support our aforementioned guidance and advice urging people to properly wash their hands to help prevent infection or spread of novel coronavirus. The US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued [COVID-19 guidance](#) stating that eyes should not be touched with *unwashed* hands.

Some other useful links:

www.alcon.com/info

www.aoa.org/contact-lens-wear-during-covid-19

<https://bcla.org.uk/Public/Public/Consumer/Contact-Lens-Wear-and-Coronavirus-guidance.aspx>

<https://coopervision.com/coronavirus>

www.jjvision.com/press-release/statement-use-contact-lenses-and-coronavirus-covid-19

<https://mailchi.mp/f3cf7d819c0c/cclsa-newsletter-template-3933609?e=5560ee2086>

www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf

www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources

Handwashing technique video.

[vwww.youtube.com/watch?v=3PmVJQUCm4E&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PmVJQUCm4E&feature=youtu.be)

Disclaimer:

Advice provided by the CCLSA in this communication, is current at the time of dissemination, but may not be best practice as circumstances change and the knowledge base and understanding surrounding the COVID-19 crisis develops. The CCLSA provides this information in good faith with the intent of improving safety, best practice and ultimately saving lives. Opinions expressed via links or otherwise, do not necessarily reflect the views of the CCLSA.

Please stay up to date by consulting the resources conveyed in this document, elsewhere through reliable sources, and via our CCLSA newsletter, Facebook page and communications.