

Caring for and cleaning soft contact lenses

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In short

Cleaning and storing your lenses correctly lowers the risk of a serious eye infection. Clean reusable lenses with the solution your optometrist recommends, never water or saliva, and keep your lens case clean and replaced. Daily disposable lenses are worn once and thrown away, so they need no cleaning. Take your lenses out and call us if your eye becomes red, painful or blurry.

This page is for soft lenses. For overnight lenses, see [ortho-K lens care](#). For rigid and scleral lenses, see [RGP and scleral lenses](#). For putting lenses in and taking them out, see [putting in and taking out soft contact lenses](#).

Daily disposable lenses

Daily disposables are made to be worn once. Throw them away as soon as you take them out. They need no cleaning, solution or case. Never wear a daily lens a second time.

Cleaning reusable lenses

Fortnightly and monthly lenses need cleaning and disinfecting every time you take them out.

- 1 Wash your hands with soap and water, and dry them on a clean, lint-free towel.

- 2 Take one lens out and place it in the palm of your hand with a few drops of your solution.
- 3 Rub the lens gently with a clean fingertip, even if the solution says no rubbing is needed.
- 4 Rinse the lens with fresh solution.
- 5 Put the lens in the correct side of the case and fill it with fresh solution. Then do the other lens.
- 6 Close the case and leave the lenses to soak for at least the time on your solution's instructions, usually overnight.

If you use a hydrogen peroxide system, the solution must be neutralised before the lenses go back in your eyes. Follow its steps exactly. Peroxide that has not been neutralised stings and burns, and can harm the eye.

Solutions

Do

- ✓ Use only the solution your optometrist recommends
- ✓ Use fresh solution every time
- ✓ Keep the bottle tightly closed, and do not let the tip touch anything
- ✓ Throw solution away once it passes its discard date

Don't

- ✗ Rinse or store lenses in tap water or sterile water
- ✗ Wet a lens with saliva
- ✗ Add new solution to old solution in the case
- ✗ Pour solution into a different bottle
- ✗ Use saline or rewetting drops to disinfect lenses. They do not disinfect

If your lenses have been stored in the case for a while, check your solution's instructions before wearing them. Never wear lenses that have been stored for 30

days or longer without disinfecting them again.

Your lens case

- 1 Each morning, once your lenses are in, tip out the old solution.
- 2 Rub and rinse the case with fresh solution, never tap water.
- 3 Leave the case open and upside down to air-dry, with the caps off.
- 4 Replace the case at least every three months, or sooner if your optometrist advises. Replace it straight away if it is cracked or damaged.

Replacing your lenses

Keep to the wearing and replacement schedule your optometrist gives you, whether that is every two weeks or every month. Old lenses, or lenses that no longer fit well, can scratch the eye. Your contact lens prescription has an expiry date, and regular aftercare checks make sure your lenses still suit your eyes.

Sleeping, swimming and showering

- **Sleeping:** take your lenses out before you sleep, unless your optometrist has told you that your lenses are made for overnight wear. Sleeping in lenses raises the risk of infection.
- **Showering and swimming:** take your lenses out first. Water, including tap, pool and shower water, can carry germs such as *acanthamoeba*, which can cause a serious infection that can permanently damage sight. Ask us about prescription swimming goggles.
- **Spa baths:** the same applies. Keep water away from your lenses.

Eye drops and makeup

- Avoid eye drops while your lenses are in, apart from the wetting or preservative-free lubricating drops your optometrist recommends.
- Put your lenses in before your makeup, and take them out before you remove it.

- Use water-soluble eye makeup, and keep eyeliner to the outer edge of the eyelid, away from the wet rim of the eye.

Red eye warning signs

Take your lenses out straight away if your eye is very red, painful, watery or sensitive to light, if your vision is blurry, or if you notice a discharge. These can be signs of an infection. Do not put your lenses back in until your optometrist says it is fine, and wear your glasses instead. Keep a pair of glasses with your current prescription for times like these.

When to call us on (03) 9702 9118

Take your lenses out and call the same day if you have:

- A red or painful eye
- Sensitivity to light
- Blurred vision that comes on suddenly
- A discharge, or an unusually watery eye
- Pain that continues after the lenses are out
- A lens you cannot remove

Call (03) 9702 9118

⚠ Go now to the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital emergency department (32 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne, open 24 hours), or call 000, if

you have severe eye pain or a sudden loss of vision and cannot reach us.

For a contact lens fitting or an aftercare check, see contact lenses, book online or call us on (03) 9702 9118.

FAQs

— Can I rinse my lenses or case with tap water?

No. Tap water can carry germs, including *acanthamoeba*, that cause serious eye infections. Use only fresh contact lens solution for your lenses and your case.

— How often should I replace my lens case?

At least every three months, or sooner if your optometrist advises, and straight away if it is cracked or damaged.

— Can I sleep in my contact lenses?

Only if your optometrist has told you your lenses are made for overnight wear. Sleeping in lenses raises the risk of infection.

— Can I swim or shower with my lenses in?

No. Take your lenses out first. Ask us about prescription swimming goggles.

— Do daily disposable lenses need cleaning?

No. Wear them once and throw them away when you take them out. Never wear a daily lens a second time.

— Can I add fresh solution to what is already in my case?

No. Tip out the old solution and use fresh solution every time. Never mix old and new solution.
