

Contact Lens Update

CLINICAL INSIGHTS BASED IN CURRENT RESEARCH

Contact lens cases: a view from practice

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As optometric professionals we are aware contact lens cases are one of the biggest contributors to infective eye disease in contact lens wearers. We also know that research indicates the general public are either not as aware of the risks, or do not take the potential threat seriously. These are some of the steps we take in practice to help support our patients in the safe use of their contact lens cases:

- **Educate the patient at the point of contact lens fitting.** We are careful to strike the right balance between information, “scare mongering” and preaching. No one wants to be treated like a child, but the reasons for correct case care and replacement must be clearly understood by the patient.
- **Reiterate this educational content during application and removal training,** where our dedicated, trained support staff demonstrate the correct methods for case care and cleaning. Hearing the same message from another source is an effective way of getting the message across. We also ensure the message is uniform throughout the practice: everyone needs to be providing the same information.
- **Supply material for the patient to take home.** For a new wearer, the amount of information can be overwhelming, and providing something they can review at home in their own time is helpful. We have access to digital tools, which we send via SMS or Email, as well as a custom booklet about contact lens wear, which all patients are issued with. Many professional associations and educational institutes around the world also produce printed material for the purpose of sharing with patients.
- **Give simple and clear instructions.** For example, we advise our patients to use one contact lens case per month. Most new bottles of solution come with a new case and it is important to use this and replace the case every thirty days. For patients concerned about plastics wastage, we have a recycling station in the practice where they can drop off their old cases, lenses and packaging.
- **Examine lens cases during routine follow up appointments.** We ask the patient to bring in their case so we can see its condition, and we always ask how old it is. I like to remind our patients that their cases are not “collector’s items” and will have no monetary value! (whilst also reminding them of the increased risk of infection with an older, less hygienic case)
- **Recommend daily disposables where additional convenience is needed.** As practitioners, our duty is to educate, and we take time to explain the importance of good case care and well as good lens care. If a patient does not want to worry about cases and cleaning, then of course recommending a daily disposable lens is the obvious choice. We find the analogy of “a new pair of underwear every day”, works well when explaining the benefits of this - our first choice modality - to patients.