

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035
shecker@preventblindness.org

October is Contact Lens Safety Month at Prevent Blindness

-Nonprofit group Prevent Blindness, Urges Public to Use Contact Lenses Safely to Help Avoid Painful Eye Health Issues and Vision Loss -

CHICAGO (Sept. 28, 2022) – [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s oldest volunteer nonprofit eye health organization, has declared October as Contact Lens Safety Month to help educate the public on the best ways to protect their eyes through proper care.

In addition to a [dedicated webpage](#), fact sheets and shareable social media graphics, Prevent Blindness also offers the “[Contact Lens Safety](#)” episode as part of the Focus on Eye Health Expert Series. Dr. Thomas L. Steinemann, professor of ophthalmology at Case Western Reserve University, discusses a variety of topics with Prevent Blindness President and CEO, Jeff Todd, including advocating for contact lens safety, patient care, and the dangers of improper use of contact lenses. The [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) recently presented Dr. Steinemann with the “[Outstanding Advocate Award](#),” recognizing his leadership and advocacy efforts spanning two decades in promoting patient safety and contact lens use.

Anyone interested in purchasing contact lenses must first receive an eye exam from a licensed eye care professional. All contact lenses are classified by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) as prescription medical devices. This applies to prescription and non-prescription (cosmetic or decorative) contact lenses.

The FDA also states that contact lenses are not over-the-counter devices. Companies that sell them as such are misbranding the device and violating Federal Trade Commission regulations by selling contact lenses without a prescription. Contact lenses sold without a prescription from unlicensed vendors may be contaminated and/or counterfeit and are therefore not safe to use.

Different types of contact lenses include:

- **Soft contact lenses** come in two basic forms—daily wear and extended wear. Both lenses are made from thin, flexible material and water. Daily-wear lenses must be removed, cleaned, and stored every day. Extended-wear lenses are designed for overnight wear. However, there is an increased risk of infection associated with extended-wear lenses. They should be worn for the period of

time prescribed by an eye doctor.

- **Hard contact lenses** offer clearer vision with certain eye conditions, and specific types may last longer. Many types of hard contact lenses are available in bifocals. It may take longer to adapt to wearing hard contact lenses than soft contact lenses.
- **Daily-wear soft lenses** are generally the most comfortable, and the eyes will adjust to wearing them in less time than with hard contact lenses. Soft lenses may be worn during vigorous physical activities and playing sports with less likelihood that the lenses will slip out of place. Soft contact lenses need special cleaning and disinfection and may tear easily, so they may not last as long as hard contact lenses.
- **Extended-wear soft lenses** offer the same advantages as daily-wear lenses. These lenses may be worn for an extended period, up to a week. However, due to the risk of infection associated with extended use, daily removal and cleaning is recommended.

A recent study published in *Ophthalmology*, "[Acanthamoeba Keratitis Risk Factors for Daily Wear Contact Lens Users](#)," found that those who use reusable contact lenses rather than disposable daily lenses are four times more likely to develop [Acanthamoeba Keratitis](#), a severe, painful infection of the cornea, the transparent outer covering of the eye, which usually causes scarring. If undiagnosed and untreated, this can lead to blindness. In the most severe cases, a corneal transplant may be necessary. The infection is believed to be caused through exposure of the eye to water contaminated with acanthamoeba, a free-living microscopic organism.

Prevent Blindness offers the following recommendations to keep eyes healthy while wearing contact lenses:

- Before handling contact lenses, wash hands with soap and water, then rinse and dry them with a lint-free towel.
- Minimize contact with water, including removing lenses before going swimming or in a hot tub.
- Wear and replace contact lenses according to the schedule prescribed by your eye care professional.
- During cleaning, using fresh solution, rub your contact lenses with your fingers, then rinse the lenses with solution before soaking them – even if the solution you are using is a “no-rub” variety.
- Contact lens cases should always be cleaned with fresh solution – not water. Then leave the empty case open to air dry.
- Do not re-use old solution or “top off” the solution in your lens case.
- Do not use cracked or damaged lens cases. Lens cases can be a source of contamination and infection.

“Whether you wear contact lenses to improve vision, or as part of a costume, it is so important to make sure you do so under the guidance of an eyecare professional,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “Following safety routines every day can help prevent painful and potentially sight-threatening infections.”

For more information and tips on contact lens safety, please visit <https://preventblindness.org/wearing-contact-lenses/>.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, visit us at preventblindness.org, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

###