



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Keep Contacts Clean

Contact Lens Wearer Demographics and Risk Behaviors for Contact Lens-Related Eye Infections — United States, 2014

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

For millions of Americans, contact lenses are an effective form of vision correction and a popular alternative to glasses. However, if not properly worn and cared for, they can put wearers at risk for eye infections.

Dr. Jennifer Cope is a physician with CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of proper contact lens care. Welcome to the show, Jennifer.

[Dr. Cope] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, approximately how many people in the U.S. wear contact lenses?

[Dr. Cope] There are a lot of people. There are over 41 million adults in the United States who wear contact lenses.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any benefits of contacts versus regular glasses?

[Dr. Cope] Well, for some people, they might choose contact lenses because they want to maintain a more natural appearance and feel better about their physical appearance. Other people might choose contact lenses because it allows them to more freely engage in sports and other recreational activities that they might not otherwise be able to with glasses.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any infection risks wearing contact lenses?

[Dr. Cope] Well, if contact lenses aren't properly worn and cared for, they can put you at risk for infections. Some of these habits include keeping your contact lenses in for longer than recommended, topping off solution in the case. This is when you add new solution to the old solution that's still in the case instead of completely dumping out the old solution. And sleeping in lenses is also a risk factor. And finally, also, exposing your contact lenses to water, whether that's rinsing or storing your lenses in water or participating in swimming or taking a shower while wearing your contact lenses. These are things that can put you at risk for infection.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some symptoms that a person may be experiencing eye problems related to their contacts?

[Dr. Cope] Some of the symptoms people might experience include red or irritated eyes, eye pain, having sensitivity to light, blurry vision, and excessively watery eyes. These could be an indication of a mild infection but could also indicate a serious infection called keratitis which, if left untreated, could

result in blindness. If people experience any of these symptoms, they should remove their contact lenses and contact their eye care provider.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, give our listeners some tips on how to properly care for their lenses.

[Dr. Cope] Contact lens wearers should never sleep in their contact lenses unless they're otherwise advised to do so by their eye care provider. They should try to keep all water away from their contact lenses. This means they should never rinse or store their lenses in water and they should avoid showering and swimming while wearing their contact lenses. They should replace their contact lenses as often as recommended by their eye care provider, as well as replace their contact lens case at least once every three months. They should avoid "topping off" which means they should discard the used solution from their case and clean it with fresh solution every day. And, finally, contact lens wearers should always wash their hands before handling their contact lenses.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about contact lens care?

[Dr. Cope] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/contactlenses

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Jennifer. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Jennifer Cope about the importance of contact lens care.

Remember, practice proper lens hygiene. Keep lenses away from water, discard used disinfecting solution from the case and replace it with fresh solution each day, and get a new case every three months. If you wear contact lenses and are experiencing red or irritated eyes, call your eye doctor as soon as possible.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.