

Study: Teens risking eye infection with contact lens habits

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Most teens who wear contact lenses are putting themselves at risk for infections, according to a new study.

Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the findings Thursday, just ahead of [Contact Lens Health Week](#), Aug. 21-25, along with a warning about proper uses of lenses.

“Contact lenses are a safe and effective way to correct your vision when they are worn and cared for as recommended,” said Jennifer Cope, M.D., M.P.H., medical epidemiologist in CDC’s Waterborne Disease Prevention Branch. “However, adolescents and adults can improve the way they take care of their contact lenses to reduce their risk of serious eye infections.”

Roughly 3.6 million adolescents ages 12-17 wear contact lenses, according to the study in the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#). Researchers surveyed 1,618 of them and found 85% have at least one risky habit.

About 44% don’t visit their eye doctors annually, while 30% sleep in their contacts, which increases chances of infection by six to eight times, researchers said. In addition, 27% wear contacts while swimming despite the possibility of the lenses carrying germs from the water.

These habits can lead to severe [eye infection](#) and even blindness, according to the CDC. About 4% of the teens surveyed reported having eye pain or redness that required medical attention.

Adults also fell short on practicing good contact habits. Roughly 81% of young adults and 87.5% of adults over age 25 reported risky practices. These groups often kept their contacts or contact case longer than recommended.

CDC tips for contact wearers

- Wash your hands before touching contacts.
- Don’t sleep, shower or swim while wearing contacts.
- Rub and rinse contacts with fresh solution only.
- Replace contacts according to your doctor’s recommendation.
- Rinse your case with solution daily and replace it every three months.
- Visit your eye doctor at least once a year.

Resources

- [CDC videos featuring people who got eye infections from risky contact behaviors.](#)
- [The CDC is hosting a Twitter chat on contact lens health and safety at noon EDT Aug. 22 using #HealthyContactsChat.](#)
- [The CDC is hosting a Reddit Science “Ask Me Anything” forum at 1 p.m. EDT Aug. 24](#)

- [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) information on safe contact lens use

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