

ALLERGIES

and Contact Lenses

**Guidance on eye allergies and their
symptoms, reducing allergy triggers,
and using contact lenses safely**

Educational Leaflet About Contact Lenses



Reviewed by



الجمعية السعودية للبصريات
Saudi Society Of Optometry

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Eye Allergies and Allergic Conjunctivitis

Seasonal eye allergies may be caused by many allergens found both indoors and outdoors. The resulting discomfort may make it difficult to work or participate in sports and recreational activities. It may also make wearing contact lenses more difficult.

Eye allergies, or allergic conjunctivitis, are an immune response to allergens that come into contact with the eye. This causes inflammation of the conjunctiva, the thin, transparent membrane that lines the inner surface of the eyelids and covers part of the eyeball. It also helps keep the surface of the eye moist.



Why Are the Eyes Easily Affected?

Eye allergies have become more common, and environmental factors and airborne pollutants may contribute to irritation and the development of allergy symptoms.

Irritants such as dust, smoke, and chlorine may worsen allergy symptoms or cause similar symptoms. Because the eyes are exposed and sensitive, they are easily affected by allergens and irritants.

Some medications and cosmetics may also cause reactions. In response to allergens, the body releases histamine, which contributes to inflammation.



Signs of Eye Allergies

Common symptoms include redness, itching, burning, increased tearing, swollen eyes, and the sensation of particles in the eye. These symptoms may be accompanied by an itchy or runny nose and sneezing. Vision may also become temporarily blurred, and the symptoms may cause fatigue or difficulty concentrating.

Avoid known allergens whenever possible. If exposure occurs, gently rinse the eyes and use preservative-free artificial tears when appropriate for your condition.

If symptoms persist, consult an optometrist or another qualified healthcare professional. Treatment may include appropriate eye drops or other medications. The safest option should be discussed based on the individual condition.



Tips for Relieving Eye Allergy Symptoms

- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes.
- Use cold compresses to relieve symptoms.
- Use preservative-free lubricating eye drops, when appropriate, to help flush out allergens.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.
- Wash bedding and pillows in hot water using a suitable hypoallergenic detergent.
- Avoid makeup during symptom flare-ups, or choose products that minimize irritation. Do not share cosmetics with others.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses that fit close to the face when going outdoors.

Allergy Seasons and Contact Lenses

Eye allergies are not limited to spring and summer; symptoms may occur for extended periods of the year, depending on allergens and local conditions.

Contact lens wearers may experience particular discomfort during allergy seasons. Some may temporarily switch back to glasses, while others may be able to continue wearing contact lenses after adjusting their wearing schedule and following an appropriate care plan.

An optometrist will assess the symptoms and determine whether contact lens use should be reduced or temporarily discontinued, or whether the lens type and wearing schedule should be adjusted.



Strategies During Allergy Season

- Daily disposable contact lenses may be considered if they are suitable for your condition following an assessment.
- Reduce contact lens wear time when symptoms worsen, or wear them only for specific activities.
- If you use reusable contact lenses, ask your optometrist whether temporarily changing the lens type or cleaning system would be appropriate.
- Use eye drops as directed by an optometrist or qualified healthcare professional; some drops may not be suitable while contact lenses are on the eyes.
- Preservative-free lubricating eye drops and cold compresses may help relieve symptoms when appropriate.

Daily Disposable Contact Lenses as an Option

Many people with allergies can continue wearing contact lenses while carefully managing their condition.

Daily disposable contact lenses are discarded at the end of each day. This may reduce the buildup of allergens and deposits on the lens surface. It also limits exposure to disinfectants and preservatives found in some lens care solutions, which may irritate the eyes of some wearers.

These lenses do not require daily cleaning; the worn pair is discarded and replaced with a new pair the following day. An optometrist should assess whether they are suitable.



Managing Allergies When Wearing Contact Lenses

Daily disposable contact lenses may be a suitable strategy for some people with allergy symptoms because a fresh pair is worn each day, reducing the time available for deposits to accumulate on the lens surface.

Studies have shown a reduction in certain symptoms and deposits among some daily disposable contact lens wearers compared with some reusable contact lens wearers.

Results vary between individuals, and this information does not mean that one option is suitable for everyone.

Eye allergies do not necessarily mean stopping contact lens use completely. An optometrist can help determine the appropriate lens type, wearing schedule, and symptom management plan.

Clear vision supports everyday life

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