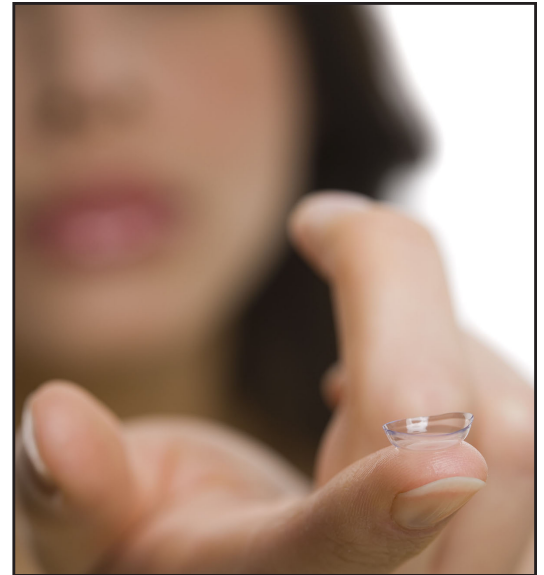


## Americans' Dirty Contact Lens Habits

(ARA) - Millions of Americans may be putting their eyes at serious risk every day by not using proper hygiene in caring for their contact lenses, a new survey reveals.

The survey, conducted by leading market research company Synovate, found that while contact lenses remain one of the safest forms of vision correction, contact lens wearers need to beef up their lens-handling regimens to ensure their eyes stay safe and healthy.

"It's certainly alarming to see how some people treat their lenses," says Dr. Pat Del Vecchio. "I see patients every day with eye infections and problems that could easily have been prevented just by taking an extra few seconds to wash their hands. Contact lenses are a tremendously safe and effective way to treat vision problems, but people need to treat them like the medical devices they are and care for them according to the directions provided to them by their eye doctor."



### THE SYNOVATE SURVEY ALSO REVEALED:

- Two out of five do not wash their hands prior to handling their lenses. Experts say the majority of germs on a lens or in a patient's eye are transferred by their hands.
- One out of five does not use fresh solution every time they store their lenses. Experts say topping off contact lens solution in the case can reduce the solution's ability to eliminate germs, which can lead to an infection.
- Two out of five have put their lenses in their mouth in order to clean them. Experts say never put contact lenses in your mouth or moisten them with saliva, which is full of bacteria and a potential source of infection.
- Seven out of 10 have admitted to swimming in their lenses, while one-third swim in their lenses regularly. Experts say there are all kinds of nasty bugs, such as microbes, living in swimming pools. One of these creatures, called Acanthamoeba, can cause severe pain and damage to the eye, sometimes necessitating a corneal transplant. You should never go swimming or enter a hot tub with your lenses in.

"Lens care also impacts lens comfort," adds Del Vecchio. "Soaking your lenses in fresh solution overnight 'reconditions' the lenses so they'll retain moisture better, which means you'll be able to wear your lenses longer with less discomfort. Discomfort is the main reason people stop wearing contact lenses, so if people just took better care of their lenses, they'd be much happier."

The most important tip of all, according to Del Vecchio, is to see your eye doctor at least once per year. "Especially for someone who wears contact lenses, that yearly visit to the eye doctor is crucial in recognizing any problems early and maintaining healthy eyes," he says.

Courtesy of ARAcontent