



Contact Lenses for Adults and Children

BY DR. THOMAS P. FINLEY, *Optometrist*

Contact lenses have been around for over one hundred years, and continually improve and get better. These medical devices have become so commonplace, many people take them for granted. There are many advantages to wearing contact lenses.

- Contact lenses provide better visual efficiency than glasses. General visual performance seems better with contact lenses and people have the impression they see better.
- Peripheral (side) vision is better with contact lenses since they eliminate the barrier of an eyeglass frame, or the edge of the eyeglass lenses.
- Contact lenses seem more comfortable than eyeglasses. They won't slip down your nose or pinch behind your ears.
- Peripheral image distortion does not exist with contact lenses.
- Contact lenses do not fog up with temperature changes or get wet when it rains.
- Contact lenses are great for physically active individuals, anyone playing sports, or those who have difficulty keeping glasses on their face.
- Contact lenses help improve self-image eliminating any uneasiness about wearing eyeglasses perceived as not being fashionable or cool. This is one of the more common reasons children want contact lenses.
- Wearing contacts, you can now buy (and see with) a nice pair of non-prescription sunglasses.

Contact lenses are very safe and work extremely well for most people, but are not risk-free. Contact lenses are FDA approved medical devices. If they are not cared for properly, or not fit properly, they can cause serious sight threatening eye problems.

Many of the problems caused by contact lenses are self-inflicted; contact lenses worn too long, or not cleaned, disinfected or replaced as instructed. Lenses were continued being worn even with a red or irritated eye. Problems can also occur in people who take proper care, but they are not as common.

If diagnosed and treated quickly, most problems resolve nicely allowing the return to wearing contact lenses. Close monitoring by your eye doctor is essential. Yearly and scheduled follow up exams insure your eyes are healthy, you're seeing your best, and your contact lenses are fitting well.

It is extremely important and often forgotten that contact lens wearers always have a good pair of eyeglasses to wear whenever not using contact lenses. If you cannot wear your contact lenses for any reason (infection, irritation, swimming, etc.), or simply choose not to wear them, you can easily proceed with eyeglasses. Most people remove their lenses every night and need a good pair of eyeglasses for mornings and evenings. Don't compromise and take chances by not having eyeglasses, or reverting to an old pair that's barely functional.

There are many different types of contact lenses available. Most new contact lens wearers choose soft lenses that are replaced regularly (daily to every month). Soft lenses are initially much more comfortable than rigid lenses and perform better for individuals who are active and involved in sports. Replacing them regularly is healthier. Daily disposable soft contact lenses have become extremely popular because they are the safest lenses to wear. They require no cleaning or disinfecting and the individual has a new clean and fresh pair of lenses to place on their eyes every day. Cleaner lenses are healthier, safer and provide better and more stable vision.

Soft lenses are very comfortable and easy to get used to wearing. Caring for the lenses (solutions) has been significantly simplified. The difficult

part is learning how to place them on the eye and remove them. This requires practice, and could take up to one hour during the first 2 weeks of wear. This should be considered when determining when to begin wearing lenses.

Being fit with contact lenses is an exciting and rewarding experience. Parents usually know best when their child is emotionally ready for contact lenses. For adults, time management seems more of an issue. Several follow-ups may be required, and it takes time learning to handle them properly and easily.

Contact lenses can be purchased almost anywhere, so make a smart decision. Many factors should be considered. Cost per box of lenses is very important, but make certain you understand what is included and not included with that price. Whoever sells you your contact lenses should offer free replacements for ripped or damaged lenses. A lens exchange program for unopened boxes should be offered if your prescription changes within the year. Professional and personal telephone consultation with a doctor or contact lens technician should be available. Is follow-up care offered? Free shipping usually occurs for a one year supply of lenses, and other discounts on eyeglasses or sunglasses are often available. These are basic services that many discount sellers don't offer. Oftentimes paying a few dollars more for lenses can save you 10 fold in the long run and provide added convenience and insurance if needed.



Dr. Thomas P. Finley received his Bachelor of Science degree from St. Francis University in Pennsylvania, and his Doctorate of Optometry from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. Following graduation, he served as an optometry officer in the United States Air Force and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and the Commendation Medal.

Dr. Finley has served as an adjunct clinical professor for three optometry schools, and has been a clinical investigator for two major contact lens companies. He has published several articles in professional and trade journals and local newspapers and has also lectured at educational conferences.

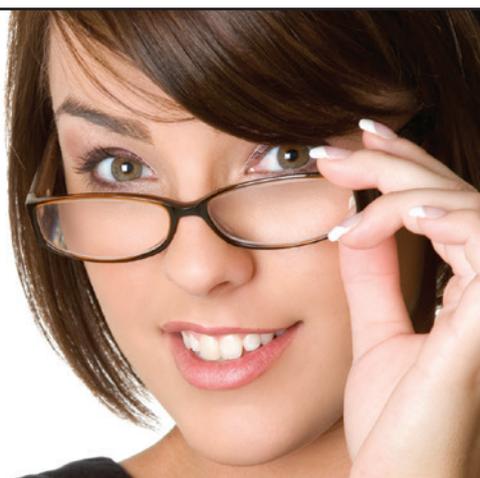
Dr. Finley is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Fellow of the Virginia Academy of Optometry, and a member of the American Optometric Association, Virginia Optometric Association, and Northern Virginia Optometric Society. He is an Advisory Board member for TLC Laser Eye Centers.

Locally, Dr. Finley serves as an active member of the Herndon Rotary Club (past president), Chamber of Commerce (past board member), Optimist Club (youth sports' coach), and Knights of Columbus (past board member). He serves on the board of the Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic. He was awarded Herndon's "Distinguished Service Award," the Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business of the Year Award," and The Times Newspapers "Best Eye Doctor Award." He has owned his Herndon optometry practice since 1989.

Dr. Finley was recently recognized by the Virginia Optometric Association as Distinguished Optometrist of the Year.

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