



## Seattle Eye M.D.s

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## How to Care for Contact Lenses

The key to avoiding the irritation and infection sometimes associated with contact lens wear is proper cleaning.

There are two main types of lens care systems: heat and chemical disinfection. The appropriate choice depends on the lens type, duration of lens wear and an individual's own biochemistry. Regardless of the type of disinfection system you choose there are a number of common steps that must be followed.

- Always wash your hands prior to handling your contact lenses.
- Remove one lens and place it in the palm of your hand. Apply a few drops of a contact soap, usually called cleaning solution. Rub the soap onto both sides of the lens surface to help remove deposits, debris, protein build-up, and any bacterial film. Removing surface deposits and other debris not only contributes to improved vision and comfort but also reduces the risk of infection and allergy. Soft extended-wear contacts may be the most likely to develop a protein build-up that can lead to lens-related allergies.
- After thoroughly cleaning the lens, rinse it with commercially available sterile saline solution. Homemade saline solutions have been linked to serious eye infections and should never be used.
- After cleaning and rinsing, lenses need to be disinfected. You and your ophthalmologist will pick the best system for you, but make sure you understand the instructions and follow them. Heat and chemical disinfection methods each require several hours of disinfection time.
- After disinfecting, rinse the lens with sterile saline before putting it in your eye.
- Your empty contact lens case should be thoroughly rinsed with warm water and allowed to air dry. All contact lens cases need to be cleaned frequently, including disposable lens cases.