

6 out of 7 teens slip up on contact lens guidelines: CDC

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(HealthDay)—About 6 out of 7 U.S. teens with contact lenses use them

improperly, upping their odds for serious eye infections, government health officials say.

Surveying 12- to 17-year-old contact-lens wearers last year, researchers found 85 percent admit to at least one risky habit that could threaten their vision.

These include sleeping, napping or swimming with their contacts in; reusing solution; rinsing lenses in tap water; or not replacing lenses and storage cases as recommended, according to a new U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report.

About 3.6 million adolescents in the United States wear contact lenses, the CDC said. Outbreaks of serious eye infections are rare in this country. But they occur most often in people who don't take proper care of their contacts.

Of teens under 18 who wear contacts, an estimated 3 million weren't completely following care guidelines, the survey revealed. This was also true of 81 percent of young adults (18 to 24). Adults 25 and older reported even worse habits, with 87 percent admitting to at least one lapse.

"Encouraging adolescents to adopt healthy contact lens wear and care habits might help them maintain healthy habits into adulthood," said the researchers led by Dr. Jennifer Cope. "There is room for improvement in order to prevent potentially serious outcomes including blindness."

Avoid sleeping or napping while wearing contact lenses to prevent infections. The study authors said that sleeping in contacts boosts the risk of eye infections by as much as eight times.

Cleaning your contact lenses properly and regularly visiting an eye-care

provider are essential for preventing [lens](#)-related [eye infections](#), the study authors said.

Specifically, they advised replacing [contact lenses](#) as often as recommended by an eye doctor and replacing the case at least every 3 months. Also, remember to remove them before swimming or showering.

Dr. Andrew Pucker, an associate professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry, said slip-ups in care often occur while traveling.

"Being prepared when traveling is key to eye safety," said Pucker. Pack travel-sized supplies, and think about your destination, he advised.

If you're going to an underdeveloped country, consider leaving your contacts home to avoid the risk of eye irritation or [infection](#), he said.

The new findings were released in the CDC's Aug. 18 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, to coincide with Contact Lens Health Week, Aug. 21 to 25.

More information: SOURCE: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Aug. 18, 2017

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [caring for contact lenses](#).

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