

**Patient
Information**

Contact Lens Clinic

Introduction

Contact lenses are fitted to patients in the hospital when there is a medical need or when vision can only be improved to an adequate level with contact lens correction.

The criteria for hospital contact lenses include; certain corneal disorders such as keratoconus, spectacle prescriptions greater than 10 diopters, corneal irregularity, cosmetic correction or for therapeutic reasons such as a 'bandage' contact lens to aid comfort or healing.

There are various different types of contact lenses available within the hospital. The optometrist will assess your suitability for specific contact lenses and will select a contact lens which will suit your eye condition and prescription.

It is not possible to offer all types of contact lenses to all patients. This is because not all lenses will meet each patient's needs. Your optometrist will explain the options to you. These could include a soft lens, a rigid gas-permeable lens, a larger scleral lens, or two lens types working in combination with one another.

You will be advised of your personal and individual recommended wearing regime and which solutions are required for maintaining the cleanliness and comfort of your contact lenses.

Some contact lenses may not need to be replaced for several years, while others may need replacing fortnightly or daily, depending on the lens type and your eye condition. Your optometrist will advise you of the required replacement plan for your contact lenses.

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Department

Optometry

Review due

November 2026

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Wearing contact lenses

It is your responsibility to wear the contact lenses as directed by your optometrist in the Contact Lens Clinic.

Do

- Wash and dry your hands before handling your contact lenses.
- Rub, rinse and store your contact lenses in the solutions recommended by the optometrist. For single-use contact lenses, these must be discarded after use. The physical effect of rubbing your lenses is an essential step to removing surface debris and grease and should be done immediately after removing your contact lens from your eye. Delaying the cleaning of your contact lens reduces the positive effect of the cleaning process. This will reduce the life of your lenses and may cause more irritation and discomfort when worn.
- Your lenses must be stored in **fresh** disinfection solution after every use. The disinfection solution needs to be changed every day.
- Check that all solutions are in date and discard after the recommended amount of time after opening (typically 3 to 6 months). **Tip: Write the date of expiry on the bottle before opening for the first time.**
- Once you have inserted your contact lenses, clean your case with the soaking or rinsing solution, wipe clean and leave to air dry.
- Replace your contact lens case every month.
- Insert your lenses before applying make-up, and remove lenses before removing make up.

Do not

- Use tap water or any other water on your lenses or lens case. Sterile saline can be used for rinsing off the remaining cleaning solution if it is not suitable to be in contact with the eye. Always read the information leaflet that comes with the solution.
- Use saliva to wet your lenses.
- Insert your contact lens(es) if it is damaged or broken in any way.
- Insert your contact lens(es) if your eyes feel irritable or painful as wearing the lens is likely to cause more problems.

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- Exceed the wearing time recommended by your optometrist.
- Sleep while your lenses are in, unless **specifically advised** to by your optometrist.
- Use your lenses when swimming or taking part in water sports unless wearing tight fitting goggles.
- Shower or use a jacuzzi, hot tub or sauna etc. while wearing the lenses.
- Change the brand/type of your contact lens solutions unless instructed by an optometrist.
- Use any eye drops while wearing your lenses before discussing it with your optometrist.

Care systems

You should use the disinfection system recommended by your optometrist. Make sure that you do not use solutions beyond the expiry date, shown on the bottle. Discard solutions that have been opened longer than the recommended time marked on the bottle. As a reminder, it is useful to write on the bottle the date it was opened.

If the lenses are removed for any length of time, they should be rubbed with your specified contact lens disinfection solution and disinfected again before wearing.

Contact lens disinfection solutions, sterile saline and ocular lubricants are not issued on prescription. They can be purchased from either a pharmacy, supermarket or registered online retailers.

Contact lens appointments and clinic attendance

When attending the contact lens clinic, you should wear your contact lens(es) to the appointment (unless you are unable to do so). The optometrist will check that you are managing well with your contact lenses, your vision will be measured and the fitting of the contact lenses assessed.

An examination of the front of your eye will identify if any adverse effects are occurring as a result of contact lens wear. The examination will also make sure that the cornea is healthy and stable. The optometrist will recommend any changes that are needed.

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As a contact lens wearer, it is your responsibility to attend regular appointments in the contact lens clinics, when requested to do so.

Contact lens appointments are not a substitute for a full eye health examination. You are required to attend regular eye health examinations with your own community optometrist, in addition to attending the contact lens clinic. The only exception to this is if you are under regular review by one of our ophthalmologists in the ophthalmology outpatient clinics and have been advised by them that routine community eye health examinations are not necessary.

It is very important that you attend your appointments. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend an appointment it is your responsibility to inform the appointments clerk and to arrange an alternative date and time.

If you fail to attend the hospital on two consecutive occasions without informing us, we will assume you are no longer wearing contact lenses and you will be discharged from the contact lens clinic. Additionally, if you demonstrate persistent poor attendance or compliance, we reserve the right to discharge you from our care. Once discharged, you cannot receive replacement lenses or be seen in the contact lens clinic without a re-referral from your GP.

On discharge from the contact lens clinic, you can request a copy of your contact lens specifications. This can be supplied, when a satisfactory fitting has been achieved, and is normally valid for a specified period only.

If you continue to wear contact lenses, you must make sure that you receive regular contact lens after-care as well as an eye health examination from your own community optometrists.

Contact lens costs and ordering

A standard charge is made for each contact lens supplied by the hospital (different charges may apply for soft, disposable lenses). This charge is set nationally as per the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Regulations 2013 (legislation.gov.uk) and is reviewed annually.

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Some patients are exempt from paying for their contact lens(es). In these circumstances, we are required to issue a voucher which you will need to sign and declare the reason for any exemption of NHS charges.

Exemption categories include:

- Children under 16
- Under 19 years of age and are in full time education
- Patients in receipt of certain benefits
- Patients who have been issued with a HC2 or HC3 certificate
- Patients named on a current NHS Tax Exemption Certificate

The leaflet HC1 which explains the exemption categories is available in the contact lens clinics. If you are on a low income and wish to apply for full or partial exemption, you will need to complete an application form for the benefits agency.

If you are in receipt of an eligible benefit, you will be required to show proof of your exemption. You will also be asked to sign the voucher declaration.

Please note that patients eligible for a voucher are still required to pay for replacement lenses if your contact lenses are lost or broken. Payment is also required if you wish to have a 'spare' contact lens. A voucher for a replacement lens is only usually provided at the end of the contact lens life or when a significant change in prescription and/or fit occurs.

Certain types of contact lenses supplied by the hospital are not charged to the patient, for example, lenses issued on a 'bandage' basis and prosthetic lenses for an eye which has no remaining vision.

Replacement lenses are only ordered on receipt of full payment.

Delivery time of a new lens can be up to 4 weeks, depending on the complexity and manufacturer of the lens.

We are unable to supply any replacement lenses if you have not attended the Contact Lens Clinic within the timescale recommended at your previous appointment.

Spare lenses are available at the current NHS charge, although exceptions may apply for highly complex contact lenses.

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Payment

Please note that **payment is required in full before any contact lens is ordered**. If you wish to order a contact lens, you must contact the optometry department. You will be informed by your optometrist of the charge you will need to pay.

To avoid any delay in ordering, we advise all patients to contact us at their earliest convenience.

The quickest method for arranging payment is by telephone to the Victoria Warehouse Payment Office, please quote:

- Your name and date of birth
- That you wish to make a payment of £ xx for contact lens(es).

Victoria Warehouse Payment Office

The Docks
Gloucester
GL1 2EL

Tel: 0300 422 2782 or

Tel: 0300 422 2687

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

If you wish to pay by cheque, please use the postal address above. Cheques should be made payable to 'GHNHSFT Optometry'. Please enclose the details above.

What to do if you are having problems

We advise all patients to have a current pair of spectacles to wear when you remove your contact lenses, even if the vision is not as good.

If you experience any pain, discomfort, reduced vision, redness or irritation you should stop contact lens wear straight away and contact the Optometry and Orthoptic Department for an urgent appointment; the telephone number is listed in the following section.

If you consider your problem to be an ocular health emergency, please contact the Eye Casualty team using the telephone number listed in the following section.

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Optometry and Orthoptic Department

Tel: 0300 422 3190

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

Outside of these hours, please leave a message on the answer machine and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

Appointments

Cheltenham General Hospital and Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 5997

Tel: 0300 422 6950

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Eye Casualty (Emergencies)

Tel: 0300 422 3578

Open 24 hours

Agreement of Terms

- I have read and understood the terms and conditions of a contact lens patient under the care of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHNHSFT) and will comply with all instructions and guidance outlined in this leaflet.
- I understand that attending the hospital contact lens clinic does not replace the need for regular eye examinations with my own community optometrist.
- I will attend my ophthalmologist's appointments or, if discharged by my ophthalmologist, I will obtain regular sight tests with an optometrist/ophthalmic medical practitioner.
- I understand that I must stop wearing my contact lenses if I experience pain, discomfort, redness, irritation or other abnormality of the eye and I will seek professional advice as soon as possible.
- I accept that if I fail to attend appointments the hospital will assume that I have stopped wearing my contact lens(es) and I will be discharged from the contact lens clinic.

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- I accept that non-compliance may result in discharge from the Hospital Eye Service (HSE) contact lens service.
- I understand that charges apply for each contact lens supplied as per the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Regulations 2013 (legislation.gov.uk) and is reviewed annually. Exemptions may apply (see the Payment section in this leaflet).
- I understand that replacement or spare contact lenses can only be ordered on receipt of full payment.
- I understand that replacement contact lenses cannot be supplied to patients who have not attended a follow up appointment within the timescale specified at the previous visit.
- I have been given instruction in the correct handling and safe wear of my contact lenses and I am aware of the potential hazards of contact lens non-compliance.
- I understand that by reading this leaflet I am aware of the terms of service when under the care of the HES contact lens department.

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85