Is it okay to sleep with my contact lenses? [1]

Dear Alice,

Is it dangerous to sleep in your soft disposable contact lenses for one night if you can't get them out?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The manufacturers' guidelines for contact lenses are created specifically for each brand and type of lens. With that said, sticking to the recommended cleaning practices can prevent eye infections and mineral deposits on your lenses. If you wear lenses for longer periods than recommended by your eye care professional, you risk eye irritation, scratches on your cornea (the front surface of your eyeball), or infections from unclean or unsterile lenses. If you have already slept in your soft disposable contact lenses for one night, however, the chance is high that your eyes will be fine, though perhaps a bit tired or sore. You may want to give your eyes a break and wear eyeglasses instead for a day.

It's unclear why you were unable to get your contacts out. Perhaps you didn't have saline solution to soak them in. Maybe you had no case to place them in. In those situations, it makes sense to prepare for unforeseen circumstances. You may want to buy a few inexpensive contact lens carrying cases. This way, you can keep a set at work, in your purse or backpack, in the glove compartment of your car, and at your partner's place? this way, you'll always have a case handy should you become unexpectedly stranded. Keeping a travel-sized multi-purpose or saline solution and lens cleaner on hand is also a good idea. If you find yourself without these items, it's still advised to remove your lenses to give your eyes a rest. In a pinch, place your lenses in a glass of regular water and then disinfect them before you wear them the next day. It may be a good idea to carry around or have a spare pair of lenses, too, just in case.

If you were unable to remove your lenses because you forgot to, or because you took a quick nap, your eyes and lenses may be a bit dry. Flooding them with saline when you wake up can help facilitate lens removal. If you think you'll end up too tired to remove and clean your lenses, you can make removing them an hour or two before you plan to hit the sack a part of your routine.

Perhaps you couldn't remove them because they got stuck or "lost" in your eyes [2]. If you have problems getting your lenses out, don't panic? the eye is a closed system, and those
lenses aren't going to go anywhere! Sometimes they move around your eyes and are no longer on your corneas. This can feel uncomfortable. Adding saline solution or lens rewetting drops to your eyes, blinking, and keeping your eyes closed for a while can make it easier for the lenses to move around to the front of your eyeballs, where you are able to remove them with ease. Probing and poking in an eye with AWOL lenses can cause eye irritation and/or infection.

If you're having difficulty due to problems with manual dexterity or have a health condition such as arthritis that can complicate regular contact removal, you may want to talk with your eye care provider about extended wear lenses that can be inserted and removed less often.

So, is it dangerous to sleep for one night in your contact lenses if you can't get them out? It's not dangerous. It's just healthier to sleep (eye) naked.

Alice!
Category:
General Health [3]
Eyes [4]

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