

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,

Whichever lenses you wear, it's best to not keep them in prolonged "contact" with the eyes. While it's not dangerous to sleep in soft disposable contact lenses, it poses lower risk to eye health and is more comfortable for your eyes if you sleep without them. Although there are extended wear contact lenses that are designed to be slept in, longer term use of others may increase the risk of eye irritations, scratched corneas, or eye infections. With that said, if it's been only a few nights, these complications are unlikely; the eyes might be sore or tired, but can likely be ameliorated by wearing only glasses for a day or two. If there's a doubt about how to care for any particular lenses, it's best to check the manufacturer's guidelines for each brand and type of lens or speak with an eye care specialist.

As it's currently unclear why it's difficult to get the contacts out, it might be helpful to explore a few scenarios and share some "solutions:"

- **If there isn't enough saline solution or a contacts case to store the lenses, it's probably best to prepare** for unforeseen circumstances in the future by carrying backup solution and lenses. Keeping travel-sized backup sets at work, in a purse or backpack, in the car, or at a partner's place reduces the chances of being caught without the necessary supplies.
- **If the lenses physically felt stuck, or were "lost,"** rest assured the eye is a closed system, and those lenses aren't going anywhere! Sometimes they move around the eye socket and are no longer on the corneas. Though this can feel uncomfortable, it isn't necessarily indicative of a severe eye issue. Being physically unable to remove contact lenses may indicate dry eyes and lenses. In this case, try repeatedly flooding the eyes with saline solution, blink a few times, and temporarily keep the eyes closed until the contacts become moist enough to facilitate removal. Once they're moist and more flexible, it'll be

easier to remove them. Just be careful not to probe or poke your eye while your lenses are in, as this often causes eye irritation or infection.

- **If you have a health condition that affects manual dexterity**, such as arthritis, which complicates regular contact removal, it's worth looking into extended wear lenses which are inserted and removed less often.

So, while sleeping with contact lenses isn't necessarily dangerous, it has the potential to cause some discomfort or increase the likelihood of other eye concerns. To explore options that can be worn during naps or prolonged sleep, consider talking with an eye care provider. Together, both parties can keep an eye on this!

Alice!

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