

Daily Disposable Contact Lenses in Pediatric Patients

Discussing contact lenses with pediatric patients and their parents seems like an overwhelming task to many eye care professionals. The majority of parents, when asked, will say their child isn't ready or is not responsible enough to wear contact lenses. Unfortunately for the patient, many of them would love to wear them. Not only does contact lens wear improve self-esteem in kids, but it compels them to become more dependable and mature. If the main concerns for parents (hygiene, compliance, ease of care/convenience) could be eliminated, would your pediatric contact lens fittings increase? By choosing daily disposable contact lenses as your primary strategy for new pediatric contact lens patients, you can not only impact the child's life, but your practice as well.

Eye care professionals who fit contact lenses have heard the facts about daily disposables before. They are more convenient for patients. Patients will be more compliant with daily disposables. The risk of contact lens related ocular infections decreases. So why not encourage new contact lens wearers, especially teens and preteens to start their glasses free life with this lens modality? Some practitioners feel that it is important for a child who wears contact lenses to show responsibility in their care before they are "given the chance" to wear daily disposables. They need to demonstrate that they can clean and disinfect their lenses properly, and adhere to a schedule with biweekly or monthly disposable lenses first. There is

some truth to that thought, but in reality most kids (and parents) would rather not have to deal with solutions, dirty cases, and calendars when it comes to contact lenses. In fact, a previous contact lens study performed on pediatric patients showed that responsibility improved with a daily modality because children were forced to learn to insert and remove their lenses every day. Children, as well as some adults, who have those extra steps of getting out their lens case, adding solution and maintaining a clean contact lens environment, are more likely to sleep in their lenses and over wear them. This also applies to patients who know that their contact lenses will last them a few weeks. Contact lens over wear increases and compliance decreases. According to a study by CIBA Vision, 82% of biweekly replacement wearers and 53% of monthly replacement wearers wore their lenses longer than recommended by the manufacturer. Unfortunately, this practice tends to open the door to bad lens habits, causes lens dryness and irritation, increases the risk of ocular infections, and ultimately leads to possible contact lens drop out. If you can encourage a daily schedule in the beginning of contact lens wear, patients are likely to continue with daily disposables, and return to your practice on an annual basis. Especially, with the continuous improvement in materials and options ranging from spherical to toric, and even to daily disposable multifocals in the near future.

Parents like the idea of their child wearing a fresh contact lens every day and not having to stress about their child's compliance or hygiene issues. Daily disposables are also great options for patients who suffer from seasonal allergies and have discomfort due to prolonged wear. However, one topic always comes up regarding these lenses – cost. There is no denying that exchanging contact lenses so often gets expensive, and let's be honest, not having to buy contact lens solutions and cases doesn't quite make up the cost difference. Nonetheless, studies have shown that many parents are willing to spend a little more money for the added convenience and less stress that a daily disposable lens provides. Surprisingly, many parents don't even realize this is an option until it's presented to them. That's why it is important to provide pediatric patients and their parents with all of their contact lens alternatives at their initial visit and let them discuss the topic before the fitting. Hopefully by educating everyone on the benefits of daily disposable contact lenses, families will make the informed choice that is best for them.

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