



Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

# Eye Health and Allergies



## The Signs of Eye Allergies

The common symptoms of eye allergies are the result of this inflammation: red, itchy, burning, tearing, swollen eyes, along with a gritty sensation in the eyes. These symptoms may be accompanied by a runny or itchy nose, sneezing, coughing, or a sinus headache. Many also find that their vision is temporarily blurred, or that they feel distracted, unproductive, or tired.



An estimated 50 million Americans suffer from all types of allergies. Approximately 4 percent of allergy sufferers have eye allergies as their primary allergy, often caused by many of the same triggers as indoor/outdoor allergies. For some, eye allergies can prove so uncomfortable and irritating that they interfere with job performance, impede leisure-time and sports activities, and curtail vacations.

## What Are Eye Allergies?

Eye allergies are also called "allergic conjunctivitis." It is a reaction to indoor and outdoor allergens (such as pollen, mold, dust mites or pet dander) that get into your eyes and cause inflammation of the conjunctiva, the tissue that lines the inside of the eyelid and helps keep your eyelid and eyeball moist. Eye allergies are not contagious.

Other substances called "irritants" (such as dirt and smoke, chlorine, etc.) and even viruses and bacteria, can compound the effect of eye allergies, or even cause irritation symptoms similar to eye allergies for people who aren't even allergic. The eyes are an easy target for allergens and irritants because, like the skin, they are exposed and sensitive.

Certain medications and cosmetics can also cause eye allergy symptoms. By way of response to these allergens and irritants, the body releases chemicals called histamines, which in turn produce inflammation.



Eyes are an easy target for allergens and irritants.

Eye allergies can be a problem for contact lens wearers. Single use contact lenses are a healthy option to discuss with your doctor.



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## How are Eye Allergies Treated?

The best defense against allergic conjunctivitis is to first avoid contact with substances that trigger your allergies.

When prevention is not enough, consider over-the-counter or prescription treatments. Eye allergy symptoms may disappear completely, either when the allergen is removed or after the allergy is treated. Talk to your pharmacist and healthcare provider about what is best for you.



## Tips for Preventing Eye Allergies

- Don't touch or rub your eye(s).
- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Wash your bed linens and pillowcases in hot water and detergent to reduce allergens.
- Avoid wearing eye makeup.
- Don't share eye makeup.
- Never use another person's contact lenses.

## Eye Allergies and Contact Lenses

For contact lens wearers, eye allergies can cause unique problems. During allergy season, there are many loyal contact lens wearers who revert back to their eyeglasses due to discomfort. But many others develop strategies that allow for daily lens wear in comfort and ease. And as for those with allergies who think they cannot wear contact lenses – the fact is many of them can.

Worn by an estimated 40 million Americans, contact lenses are a way of life. In the past, contact lens wearers have been interrupted by allergies, especially seasonal allergies, causing some to discontinue lens-usage, and others to stop considering contact lenses as an option.

But some of today's contact lenses are far more accommodating for people with allergy-related eye conditions. Contact lenses can be fitted for vision conditions such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism. In addition, they are available in multiple modalities, including daily disposable and two-week replacement. Your doctor will direct you to the right lens for your vision and lifestyle needs. Replacement wear lenses require maintenance—cleaning and disinfecting every day after removal—as proteins, allergens, and lipids cling to their surface. These can cause discomfort, particularly for allergy-sufferers.

## Smart Strategies for Contact Lens Wearers

Here are some strategies that doctors and experienced lens wearers recommend:

- Limit wearing time.
- Make your own allergy-season “paradigm shift,” by wearing your lenses part-time, for example, for sports, social events (e.g., weddings and proms), and photos with family and friends.
- If you use daily wear, two- or four-week replacement contacts, talk to your eye doctor about which lens-care cleaning system is best for you.
- Use eye drops as prescribed by your doctor.

Studies have shown that single-use contact lenses can be a healthy option for contact wearers in general, including for some people with eye allergies.

## Single-Use Lenses: A Healthy Choice for Many People with Eye Allergies

One-day contact lenses (daily disposable lenses thrown away at end of the day) not only avoid the surface build-up of irritating allergens, but also eliminate exposure to the disinfectants and preservatives in lens-cleaning solutions—which themselves may lead to allergic reactions for some wearers. In addition, throwaway lenses are less time-consuming and more convenient than replacement lenses.

In a three-year study<sup>1</sup> comparing the clinical performance of daily disposables (1-DAY ACUVUE® Brand Contact Lenses) with that of conventional daily-wear lenses, single-use lens wearers reported fewer symptoms of redness, cloudy vision, and grittiness; at the same time, they reported better vision and overall satisfaction, and had fewer lens surface deposits, complications, or unscheduled doctor's visits.

<sup>1</sup> Solomon OD, Freeman MJ, et al. “A 3-year prospective study of the clinical performance of daily disposable contact lenses compared with frequent replacement and conventional daily wear contact lenses.” CLAO J, 1996; 22:250-7.

## 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® Brand Contact Lenses Offer Advantages for Allergy Sufferers



1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® are the only daily disposable lenses featuring LACREON™ technology, a unique process that permanently embeds a water-holding ingredient, with similar properties to that found in natural tears, into the lens material. This technological advance locks in moisture, allowing the eyes to feel fresh and comfortable all day long.

When worn on a daily disposable basis, 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® may provide improved comfort for two out of three patients suffering from mild discomfort associated with allergies during contact-lens wear, as compared with those wearing two-week lenses.

For a **FREE\* TRIAL PAIR certificate for 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® visit: [www.acuvue.com/seasons](http://www.acuvue.com/seasons)**

\* Professional Exam and Fitting Fees not included. Valid only while supplies last

**Important information for contact lens wearers:** ACUVUE® Brand Contact Lenses are available by prescription only for vision correction. An eye care professional will determine whether contact lenses are right for you. Although rare, serious eye problems can develop. To help avoid these problems, follow the wear and replacement schedule and the lens care instructions provided by your eye doctor. Do not wear lenses if you have an eye infection, or experience eye discomfort, excessive tearing, vision changes, redness or other eye problems. If one of these conditions occurs, contact your eye doctor immediately. For more information on proper wear, care and safety, talk to your eye care professional, call 1-800-843-2020 or visit [acuvue.com](http://acuvue.com).

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