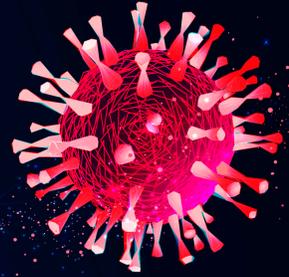


COVID-19

EYE HEALTH CARE TIPS



HOW IT SPREADS

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a new disease and health and medical experts are still learning how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it may continue to spread in the United States. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, particularly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). It can also spread from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or possibly your eyes.

CORONAVIRUS & THE EYES

The eye is highly vascularized tissue (meaning it has a lot of blood vessels) that is in very close proximity to the sinuses and the brain, which makes it an easy entry point for viruses. As a result, COVID-19 may enter the body through the eyes and then spread to the whole body through the blood vessels within the conjunctiva, the mucous membrane that covers the front of the eye and lines the inside of the eyelids.

Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is a symptom of coronavirus and can be transmitted by aerosol contact with the conjunctiva. The virus may also present other ocular signs and symptoms such as extreme light sensitivity, irritation and watery discharge.

PROTECT YOUR EYE AND OVERALL HEALTH



GUARD AND AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES — as well as your hands and mouth — to help slow the spread of

coronavirus.



WASH HANDS FREQUENTLY with soap and water, and for at least 20 seconds

per hand. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.



AVOID CLOSE CONTACT

with people who show signs of respiratory condition, such as coughing or sneezing. Respiratory droplets produced when an infected

person coughs or sneezes can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. They can also enter through your eyes.



CLEAN AND DISINFECT

shared areas and frequently touched surfaces. This includes tables, doorknobs, light

switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. The virus can spread through tears and touching a surface where tears have landed (or any contaminated object) can cause infection.



USE PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR

to safeguard from any potential eye hazards at home, work or while out in public. In certain environments, it may

be helpful wear protective eyewear such as safety glasses, sunglasses, non-prescription goggles or face shields.



PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

and remain out of congregate settings, avoiding mass

gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Information updated on 4-16-2020

GUIDE FOR CONTACT LENS WEARERS

New: According to the CDC, there is currently no evidence to suggest contact lens wearers are more at risk for acquiring COVID-19 than eyeglass wearers. People who are healthy can continue to wear and care for their contact lenses as prescribed by their eye doctor. The following tips can help ensure proper wear and care for contact lenses:

- **EXERCISE PROPER HAND WASHING.** When using contact lenses or spectacles, one should wash their hands carefully and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, followed by hand drying with unused paper towels. This should occur before every contact lens insertion and removal. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Allow hand sanitizer to completely and fully dry before handling contact lenses. People should avoid touching their face, including their eyes, nose and mouth, with unwashed hands.
- **DISINFECT CONTACT LENSES.** Contact lens wearers should either dispose of their daily disposable lenses each evening, or regularly disinfect their monthly and two-week lenses according to instructions from the manufacturer and one's doctor of optometry.
- **DISCONTINUE LENS WEAR IF SICK.** Consistent with recommendations for other types of illness, those who feel ill with cold or flu-like symptoms should cease contact lens wear.
- **GLASSES ARE NOT PROVEN TO OFFER PROTECTION.** There is no scientific evidence that wearing spectacles or glasses provides protection against COVID-19 or other viral transmissions.

IF YOU ARE SICK OR EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS:



STAY HOME, except to get medical care.



If you have fever, runny nose, cough or fatigue, or think you may have been exposed to the coronavirus, call ahead before visiting your doctor or **CONTACT LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH HOTLINE IF SO DIRECTED.**



DO NOT GO DIRECTLY TO AN ER, your

doctor's office or your community health center unless it is an emergency.



WEAR A FACEMASK when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes, and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. Please consult with your health care provider about additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

Follow the CDC and WHO for the most reliable, up-to-date information.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#))
- World Health Organization ([WHO](#))
- [AOA's COVID-19](#) resource page for the latest optometric and public health information.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, patients continue to look to doctors of optometry, their primary eye health care physicians, for accurate eye health and vision guidance. The American Optometric Association's (AOA) priority is to support the health and safety of the public and the optometric community and will continue to assess the situation to ensure everyone not only understands the risks associated with this pandemic but also have the latest information available.

Information updated on 4-16-2020

EYE HEALTH PATIENT SAFETY TIPS



Across the country, optometry practices are beginning to reopen and resume delivery of complete, comprehensive eye health and vision care. While practice operations will proceed under a “new normal,” the American Optometric Association (AOA) and member doctors of optometry are working to ensure the continued safe delivery of essential eye care by doctors of optometry during the COVID-19 public health emergency for patients and the public.

TIPS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR NEXT OFFICE VISIT:



When scheduling your appointment, ask your

doctor about safety protocols they have in place to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the office.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with

unwashed hands while in the office.



Many health care offices will request that you attend your appointment

without accompaniment, unless you require assistance. If you do need assistance, alert the staff to your needs to help the office manage patient flow efficiently.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least

20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.



The use of a facemask or cloth face cover that covers

your nose and mouth and gloves is strongly recommended, and may even be required to enter a healthcare facility.



Continue to keep about six feet between yourself

and others. **A cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.**



Bring hand sanitizer with you in case you are unable

to wash your hands as necessary



Notify your doctor if you or anyone in your household display any signs or symptoms of

COVID-19. If you are experiencing symptoms, such as loss of the sense of smell or taste, or have fever or cough, consult with your primary care provider first unless you are experiencing ocular-related emergency warning signs.

For more information about eye health and to find a local AOA doctor of optometry, visit [aoa.org/eyehealthCOVID19](https://www.aoa.org/eyehealthCOVID19).