

REVITALISING YOUR CONTACT LENS BUSINESS

GROWTH

What type of person is a typical contact lens wearer? As DOs and CLOs we also need to think about contact lenses for all sorts of people. In this article we consider how to introduce contact lenses to parents of younger children, and to presbyopes who have never contemplated contact lenses before, and how this can benefit your practice as well as your patients.

It doesn't matter how happy a patient is with glasses, there will be moments where specs are a problem. One way to develop your contact lens practice is to increase the number of people you talk to about occasional use. Modern daily disposables lenses are comfortable and quick to get used to, and can be worn simply for sports, if you have a patient who finds specs a nuisance, for weekend or social wear, or even to the hairdressers, if you want to see what the hairdresser is doing. For each person you need to find the occasion when glasses are a pain. Ask about their hobbies, their work, and if they go to the gym. Ask how are the glasses for that particular activity, and that gives you a way to start a conversation about contact lenses.

Do you discuss contact lenses with every patient? It may be time to alter your way of thinking and give contact lenses equal prominence rather than assuming specs are the first choice. Contact lens patients will need both specs and lenses, and generally are loyal, returning customers – all reasons to ensure the optometrist proactively mentions contact lenses and spectacles as options for correction where appropriate.

Another area where your practice may be missing out is children and contact lenses. With increasing evidence for the benefits of contact lenses for myopia control, every practitioner could be seen to have a duty to raise the issue with myopic parents and parents of children newly diagnosed with myopia. Starting a child at, say, seven, is not necessarily more difficult than starting a teenager with contact lenses. In fact, with commitment from the parents, you may find it easier to develop good hygiene and compliance. Parents and children may be motivated by reducing the progression of myopia, but they may also like the idea that their child can play games and sports without specs. Spectacle-wearing parents may also be aware of the stigma of wearing specs as a child

and be keen to avoid that for their children. Other parents who have children with specs that slip all the time may be motivated by the guarantee of good vision with contact lenses always ensuring the child is looking through the centre of their lenses. Offer the option of contact lenses, explore the parent and child's interests, beliefs about lenses, and you can help



them develop a better understanding of when lenses are a good option and how they can help.

Presbyopes may be on a different part of the age spectrum to young children, but they offer a

similar chance to increase the scope of your contact lens practice. We now have a range of products that work better than anything we have had in the past for presbyopes. Low hyperopes and emmetropes who are becoming presbyopic have had a lifetime without vision correction, so they don't want specs. They have often been in denial for four to five years, so they are receptive to anything that alleviates the need to use specs, at least on a social basis. The daily disposable multifocal lens is a big success for this group of patients. Presbyopic contact lens wearers are loyal too. Daily disposable lenses allow you to be creative and offer different prescriptions for different activities.

By personalising the prescription for contact lenses you are also offering a service the patient can't get online. As we live longer, older people are more active and want contact lenses for activities like skiing or dancing. Again, they tend to be compliant and turn up on time. A good opening question to start a conversation about contact lenses could be, 'Tell me when your glasses annoy you'. It might be going out in the rain or playing golf. You can then say 'Well, there's something you can do about that'. Another friendly introductory question might be to ask about any events they have coming up. People may be interested in lenses for their



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own wedding anniversary or their child's wedding. Show older patients modern soft lenses, offer a trial and explain how easy they are to get used to as many people may still be thinking of rigid lenses.

By thinking about children and older people as potential contact lens wearers, we can learn some important pointers to grow your practice. However much a spectacle wearer likes their glasses, there will be occasions when they would prefer an alternative. Occasional and part-time use can be a good way to open a conversation about contact lenses, and follows on naturally from the questions you ask every day as a DO about hobbies, work and lifestyle. By giving every patient the chance to consider how lenses might work for them, you are not only improving patients' lives, you will also be improving the practice bottom line.