

Making *Contact*

FALL 2008

CooperVision

SEE BEYOND THE ORDINARY™

Learn how to talk to parents about kids and contact lenses, spot the best candidates, sharpen your communication skills and boost compliance among young patients.

Back to School With Contact Lenses

Here are some pointers to help explain to parents that contact lenses are great for kids, too.

It's that time of year again, when children get their annual eye exams and head back to school. This presents the perfect opportunity for you to talk to parents and children about contact lenses as a great alternative to eyeglasses. After all, not all parents know that children can wear contact lenses successfully and many don't fully recognize their benefits.

Here's what you need to know to inform parents and children about contact lenses and answer any questions they have.

Kids Can Wear Contact Lenses

Children as young as 8 to 12 and teens 13 to 17 can successfully wear, care for and enjoy contact lenses, according to a recent study. Researchers surveyed 169 contact lens wearers (ages 8 to 17) and found they reported similar improvements in quality of life.¹ Children and teens said they felt much better about their appearance and participating in activities. Given these findings, the researchers suggested that children ages 8 to 12 should be offered contact lenses as routinely as teens.

"Parents and doctors tend to think that 12 or 13 is the 'magic age' for contact lenses," says Kristi Kading, O.D., F.A.A.O., who specializes in pediatric optometry at Totem Lake Vision Center in Kirkland, Wash.

In this issue:

Back to School With Contact Lenses

Putting 'em on the Path To Successful Lens Wear

How Would You Handle This Challenging Scenario?

"There's no concrete reason for this. It's just something that gets repeated and becomes ingrained. This study found that children and teens benefited equally from contact lens wear and were equally able to care for their lenses. That's made me more proactive in offering contact lenses to children."

Dr. Kading says that parents and kids usually are surprised when she suggests contact lenses. "Some go for it right away,"

she continues. "Others think about it for another year."

Christian P. Guier, O.D., of the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla., first spreads the word about contact lenses with his employees' children. "My staff members have kids of all ages," he explains. "Employees see that I'm comfortable fitting the 9-year-old son of their coworker for contact lenses, so they feel comfortable talking to patients about fitting kids with contact lenses. They have first-hand experience they can share with parents and children."

Benefits of CLs Abound

Children enjoy wearing contact lenses for many of the same reasons adults like them. "Kids like the visual acuity and the way they feel. And they don't worry about their eyeglasses sliding down their noses, fogging up or getting smudged. They really appreciate these things," Dr. Guier says. Kids benefit from contact lenses in these unique ways:

- **Better sports performance.** Contact lenses give kids better peripheral vision than eyeglasses and prevent teammates from accidentally grabbing and knocking them off their face. "Many kids actually remove their eyeglasses to avoid breaking them while playing sports," Dr. Kading says. "But they jeopardize optimal vision."
- **Improved confidence and self-esteem.** "More children are telling me they want contact lenses for social reasons," Dr. Guier says. "They say that other kids poke fun at their eyeglasses. With contact lenses, kids have a special attitude — a confidence boost. They enjoy the benefits that adults do, and they like their new appearance."
- **Fewer misplaced eyeglasses.** "Some doctors believe that if a child loses his eyeglasses, he'll lose his contact lenses, too. But I think the opposite is true," Dr. Kading explains. "Kids are more motivated to keep and take care of their contact lenses."



Kid-friendly Lenses

With children, the less contact lens care they have to contend with the better. Daily disposables, for example, are less likely to accumulate dirt and other debris that can cause eye irritation and other problems.

Back to School With Contact Lenses *(cont.)*

Kids throw away daily disposables, such as Proclear 1 Day (CooperVision), at the end of the day and insert a fresh pair in the morning. So their parents don't have to worry about them cleaning and storing lenses. ClearSight 1 Day, CooperVision's UV-absorbing daily disposable lenses, are another great option for kids, and they provide the added benefit of sun protection.

"I look for a daily disposable for new, young contact lens wearers," Dr. Guier says. "All they have to do is get their hands squeaky clean before insertion and removal. They have no worries about cases, solutions, etc. The word *daily* is very clear, so there's no forgetting when to change lenses."

Moist, highly breathable 2-week lenses, such as Avaira (CooperVision), also are a viable option. "Two-week lenses were used in the contact lens study with kids and teens," Dr. Kading says. "I use a lot of daily disposables, and parents like that. But I'm comfortable knowing that kids can handle a 2-week lens as well. It seems like a high expectation, but kids prove time and again that they can be responsible and wear contact lenses successfully." ■

Reference

1. Walline JJ, Gaume A, Jones LA, et al. Benefits of contact lens wear for children and teens. *Eye Contact Lens*. 2007;33:317-321.

Putting 'em on the Path to Successful Lens Wear

Learn how to spot the best candidates and hone your communication skills.

Most contact lens wearers remember the process of being fitted for contact lenses. So it's important to determine which kids are the best candidates up front and sharpen your communication skills to ensure they have a lifetime of successful contact lens wear.

Here's how to spot the best candidates and strategies to improve your daily interaction with kids and parents.

Best Candidates

Many kids age 8 and up make good candidates for contact lenses. Kristi Kading, O.D., F.A.A.O., who specializes in pediatric optometry at Totem Lake Vision Center in Kirkland, Wash., looks for these characteristics:

- **Healthy eyes.** Most children have good anterior segment health. If the child has allergies or blepharitis, the doctor needs to treat the condition first before prescribing contact lenses.
- **Motivation.** For success, children – not the parents – must be excited about getting contact lenses.
- **Active lifestyles.** Kids participating in sports and other outdoor activities enjoy the freedom of wearing contact lenses. Parents have an added benefit as well: no more broken eyeglasses.
- **Higher prescriptions.** Children with higher prescriptions usually have to wear eyeglasses during all waking hours. The eyeglasses eventually become part of their identity. Having the option to wear contact lenses, even part-time, can have lasting benefits.
- **Anisometropia.** If the difference in prescription between a child's two eyes is significant enough, his brain will have difficulty merging two images. This doesn't occur with contact lenses. With contact lenses, the result is better binocular vision.

- **Good hygiene.** Kids with dirty fingernails or poor general hygiene aren't good candidates for contact lenses.

"Age isn't the sole deciding factor," Dr. Kading says. "I've spoken with teens who don't want to be told what to do, and I've seen first graders follow my directions to the letter. I fit a 7-year-old competitive gymnast for daily disposables, and at her next follow-up visit, she was so grateful."

Checklist: Talking to Kids and Parents

When you meet with children and parents about contact lenses, cover these topics to ensure everyone receives a thorough education:

- ✓ Eye health and contact lens risks
- ✓ Insertion and removal techniques
- ✓ Cleaning and hygiene
- ✓ Dealing with lenses that pop out and other issues.

Choice Words

As a technician or member of the front desk staff, you often begin conversations with kids and parents about contact lenses. When parents make an appointment, ask if they're considering contact lenses for their child. If the parent seems baffled or dismisses the idea, calmly say that many children in the practice wear contact lenses, and they're quite happy with them.

To start an in-depth discussion with patients, Kelly T. Harris, F.C.L.S.A., N.C.L.E.-A.C., R.O., director of contact lenses at the University of Virginia department of ophthalmology in Charlottesville, asks kids these questions:

- In what sports and activities do you participate?
- Which type of contact lens would you like? "If they have no knowledge of contact lenses, I discuss the different types we have, their wear schedules and how to take care of them," Ms. Harris says.
- How often do you plan to wear contact lenses? "This is a

huge deciding factor,” Ms. Harris explains. “If they’ll only wear them occasionally or for sports, a daily lens is best. For everyday wear, I suggest a lens with a 2-week or monthly replacement schedule.”

K. Heather Power, F.C.L.S.A., Contact Lens Certified Optician and owner of Contact Lens Services in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, asks parents:

- Do you have to nag your child to wash his hands, take a bath or brush his hair? “Kids whose parents must nag them about good hygiene aren’t ready for contact lenses,” Ms. Power says.

If good hygiene isn’t an issue, Ms. Power asks children:

- Why do you want to wear contact lenses?
- Do you know that you need to follow certain rules when you wear contact lenses? “Kids need to understand that the consequences of poor contact lens care can be far more severe compared to not cleaning their eyeglasses,” Ms. Power explains.

Ms. Power also asks children:

- Do you understand that you’ll need to continue wearing your eyeglasses for part of the day? And if you develop any problems, you may have to go back to your eyeglasses temporarily? “Kids need to understand that they’re not throwing away their eyeglasses. They still have to wear them if they have an injury, pink eye and so on,” Ms. Power says.

What should you avoid saying to young patients about contact lenses? “Never lie,” advises Keith W. Harrison, A.B.O./N.C.L.E.(A), F.C.L.S.A., optician and certified contact lens fitter at Harrison Optical Services, located at Toronto Western Hospital. “Don’t say, ‘You won’t feel anything.’ I tell kids that if they were always barefoot and they started wearing shoes, it would feel a little different, and so will wearing contact lenses. I want to keep things simple and realistic, so I can under-promise and over-deliver.”

Of course, some parents like to focus the discussion on dollars and cents. Keep a reference sheet with all the fees and lens costs in the reception area. It should list the cost of the exam, fitting and 1 year of disposable contact lenses.

Fitting, I&R and Lens Care Discussions

Most practices involve the parents in the fitting, insertion and removal (I&R) training and contact lens care discussions. This enables the whole family to learn about contact lens care, but it also can create some confusion. [See coopervision.tv/lens-wear-and-care.shtml for a primer on contact lens care.]

To begin, ask the parent to sit down nearby. Face the child (not the parent) and maintain eye contact. You want to make it clear that the child is the patient, not the parent. Direct all of your comments to the child – even if you’re answering a parent’s question.

Sometimes, a parent’s presence puts pressure on you and the child or is counterproductive in some other way. Christopher Thaxton, N.C.L.E., A.B.O., a licensed optician at Physician’s Eye Center in Aiken, S.C., believes the technician should feel free to request time alone with the child if needed.

“I tell parents, ‘It can be hard for kids to concentrate with so many eyes watching,’ or ‘I need some one-on-one time with Adam so I can

6 Ways to Boost Patient Compliance

Employ these six strategies to ensure young contact lens wearers follow the rules:

1. Suggest a lens with a care regimen that works best for them, such as daily disposables.
2. Send home a contact lens care sheet so kids can easily refer to the instructions.
3. Encourage parents to designate an area in their home for insertion and removal where kids can use a magnifying mirror.
4. Be available for complimentary visits if kids need more I&R training.
5. Direct parents and kids to Web sites that offer free information about contact lenses and how to care for them. Several companies like CooperVision have sites especially for patients (coopervision.com).
6. Quiz kids during progress visits. Dr. Kading brings kids back for a progress visit in about a week. She asks them questions such as:
 - How do you care for your contact lenses when you plan to swim?
 - How long do you wear your contact lenses during the day?
 - When do you throw them out?
 - What do you do if you realize you’ve forgotten to take your lenses out?
 - Do you wear your friends’ contact lenses?
 - Can you put contact lenses in your mouth? Can you rinse them in water?
 - When should you carry your solution with you?

ensure he masters the manual dexterity and proper technique to learn to wear contact lenses.’ ”

Making the Most of Opportunities

If having a parent in the room isn’t a problem, use the time as an opportunity to tell the parent about possible contact lens options.

“If I have a parent who’s wearing eyeglasses, I begin a discussion about contact lenses for him,” says Christian P. Guier, O.D., of the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla. “Often, I find that the parent believes he can’t wear them because of astigmatism or bifocals. I tell him that almost anyone can wear contact lenses, just like his 10-year-old. Usually, he’ll make an appointment, and he’ll talk to other friends and family members, too.”

Vickie S. Portis, N.C.L.C.-A.C., F.C.L.S.A., advanced certified CL technician at Vistar Eye Center in Roanoke, Va., finds that younger siblings sometimes envy older brothers or sisters who are getting contact lenses. “If a younger sibling is there, I plant the seed so the parent will consider having the younger child fitted as well,” she says. “Once, a very bright 7-year-old showed great disappointment, because she had eyeglasses and her 10-year-old sister received contact lenses. We fitted the 7-year-old in contact lenses, and she turned out to be one of my best patients.”

When it comes to contact lens candidates, that kind of motivation can make all the difference in long-term success – at any age. ■

How Would You Handle This Challenging Scenario?

A Technician Gives I&R Training to an Anxious Child With an Overbearing Parent

“Hold your hand palm-side up and your pointer finger up like this,” explained technician Stacey Johnson for the fifth time, as she instructed 8-year-old Kevin Garvin to insert and remove a contact lens. “Pick up the lens and place it on your pointer finger and slowly insert it into your eye. You almost did it perfectly before,” she assured him. “Practice makes perfect.”

As Kevin was about to insert the lens, he blinked his eye rapidly, and the lens fell onto his shirt. “I can’t do this,” Kevin sighed, stomping his foot. “Maybe we should schedule another visit and try again then,” Stacey suggested.

“Kevin, you have to keep your eye open!” exclaimed his mother, Denise, a long-time contact lens wearer. “Otherwise you’ll never get the lens in!”

“Not all children get this on the first visit,” Stacey calmly

explained. “Some kids need more time.”

“Well, that’s one thing I don’t have is time!” Denise snapped.

“Kevin, you’ve seen mommy do this a thousand times,” Denise continued. “It’s really easy. Try it again,” she insisted.

“OK Kevin,” Stacey sighed. “You can do this. Hold your finger up like this. Keep your eye open. No, don’t blink ...”

“Kevin, you’re not paying attention,” Denise interjected, rising from her seat. Denise stood behind Kevin, grabbed his finger and held his eye open. Suddenly, tears spilled down Kevin’s cheeks as he sobbed. “Alright, I give up,” Denise said, taking the box of lenses from Stacey. “I’ll insert and remove the contact lenses at home myself if I have to.”

Stacey’s eyes widened.

If you were Stacey, what would you do or say next?

K. Heather Power, F.C.L.S.A., contact lens certified optician, owner of Contact Lens Services, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

I would’ve pulled Kevin’s mother aside as soon as she began interrupting the training session and said, “We need to let Kevin work at his own speed, or he’ll continue to get frustrated and give up. There’s a great coffee shop around the corner, or you can go shopping for 20 minutes, so I can work with Kevin alone. I’ll see if I can calm him down, so he’ll be more relaxed and better able to perform the procedure.”

It’s often difficult for a child to learn insertion and removal while a parent is watching and interrupting. It can make them more nervous and anxious, which hinders the process. The child needs to do well with inserting and removing lenses, and this is more likely without distractions.

Vickie S. Portis, N.C.L.C.-A.C., F.C.L.S.A., advanced certified CL technician, Vistar Eye Center, Roanoke, Va.

If I were Stacey, I’d tell Kevin’s mother that the blink reflex isn’t a voluntary reaction. And you can’t immediately train someone to control it, either. Generally, girls have an easier time with I&R, especially if they’ve been applying eye makeup.

I’d have Kevin practice by touching his lower eyelid with a clean finger without blinking. He’d be training the blink reflex to relax. If I were able to insert a lens and let Kevin remove it, I would be able to tell him that he was halfway there, which would’ve

boosted his confidence.

Of course, with Kevin’s mother upset, I might’ve asked her if I could work with him one-on-one while she sat outside in the waiting area. I’d tell her that doing the insertion and removal herself is not an option. What would happen if he slept at a friend’s house and wasn’t able to insert the lens himself?

Vicky Sheppard, F.C.L.S.A., contact lens program manager, Vision Essentials by Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles

Most of these situations are preventable. At the beginning of I&R training, I tell parents and children that it takes trial and error to master these skills. I also tell them not to get discouraged if they don’t get it on the first, second or even the third try. Saying this up front usually puts kids and parents at ease, and prevents a frustrating interchange between them.

When parents want their children to insert and remove contact lenses the way they do, as in this case, I let kids try it their parents’ way. I stay calm and open to hear what parents have to say because, in some cases, their methods actually help the child. If they don’t help, however, and mom sees that her way of inserting and removing contact lenses isn’t working for her child, I go back to what works best. If tension builds and escalates — as it did between Kevin and his mother — I’d speak to the parent privately, explain the process again and perhaps suggest that we try it at a later date during a follow-up visit when the child is calm and more likely to succeed. ■