

## *Are Contact Lenses a Good Choice for Kids?*

Contact lenses can offer several benefits over other forms of vision correction for kids. But a common question many parents have is: "When is my child old enough to wear contact lenses?"

Physically, your child's eyes can tolerate contact lenses at a very young age. In fact, some babies are fitted with contact lenses due to eye conditions present at birth. And in a recent study that involved fitting nearsighted children ages 8-11 with one-day disposable contact lenses, 90% had no trouble applying or removing the contacts without assistance from their parents.

### *A Matter of Maturity*

The important question to ask yourself is whether your child is mature enough to insert, remove and take care of their contact lenses. How they handle other responsibilities at home will give you a clue. If your child has poor grooming habits and needs frequent reminders to perform everyday chores, they may not be ready for the responsibility of wearing and caring for contact lenses. But if they are conscientious and handle these things well, they may be excellent candidates for contact lens wear, regardless of their age.

### *Contact Lenses for Sports*

Many kids are active in sports. Contact lenses offer several advantages over glasses for these activities. Contacts don't fog up, get streaked with perspiration or get knocked off like glasses can. They also provide better peripheral vision than glasses, which is important for nearly every sport. There are even contact lenses with special tints to help your child see the ball easier.

For sports, soft contact lenses are usually the best choice. They are larger and fit closer to the eye than rigid gas permeable (GP) lenses, so there's virtually no chance they will dislodge or get knocked off during competition.

### *Controlling Nearsightedness*

If your young son or daughter is nearsighted, rigid gas permeable (GP) contacts may be a good choice. GP lenses are more durable and often provide sharper vision than soft contacts.

A modified technique of fitting gas permeable lenses — called orthokeratology or "ortho-k" — can reverse myopia temporarily. Kids put their ortho-K lenses

in at night and wear them while they're sleeping. In the morning, when the lenses are removed, nearsighted kids should be able to see clearly without lenses of any kind.

Researchers also are finding that multifocal soft contact lenses may be effective for myopia control. Multifocal contacts are special lenses that have different powers in different zones of the lens.

### *Building Self-Esteem with Contact Lenses*

Contact lenses can do wonders for some children's self-esteem. Many kids don't like the way they look in glasses and become overly self-conscious about their appearance because of them. Wearing contact lenses can often elevate how they feel about themselves and improve their self-confidence. Sometimes, even school performance and participation in social activities improve after kids switch to contact lenses.

### *Glasses Are Still Required*

If your child chooses to wear contact lenses, they still need an up-to-date pair of eyeglasses. Contact lenses worn on a daily basis should be removed at least an hour before bedtime to allow the eyes to breathe. Also, there will be times when your child may want to wear their glasses instead of contact lenses. And contact lenses should be removed immediately anytime they cause discomfort or eye redness.

### *Don't Push Contacts on Your Kids*

Motivation is often the most important factor in determining whether your son or daughter will be a successful contact lens wearer. If you wear contact lenses yourself and love them, that still doesn't mean they are the right choice for your child. Some children like wearing glasses and have no desire to wear contact lenses.

Sometimes it's just a matter of timing. Often, a child may feel they don't want contacts, but a year or two later, they do.