Contact lens service

Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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Introduction

The contact lens service at the Optometry unit in the Leicester Royal Infirmary gives you contact lenses only if you have a medical need.

This is if:

- your vision cannot be improved with glasses but can be improved with specialist contact lenses.
- your normal contact lenses cause problems.
- you need it as a bandage to ease pain.
- you have other reasons.

You will be referred by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) if you need a contact lens for these reasons.

In the clinic, we will make sure that you are able to have and are allowed to get lenses from the hospital. A full assessment will be carried out to select the correct lens type.

You might need to see a doctor a few times before you can start to wear your contact lens. This is because some eye conditions are complex and lenses are often specially made.

We will give you instructions about:

- putting the contact lens in,
- taking the contact lens out,
- cleaning, disinfecting and storing the lenses.

We will carefully check the lenses and their effect on your eyes regularly. It is **important** that you attend these follow up appointments wearing your contact lenses. Please bring your case and solution with you and any eye drops you may be using.

Complications of wearing contact lenses

It is important to follow the advice of your optometrist and staff at the hospital to minimise the risk of complications.

Possible complications are:

Contact lens over-wear

If you wear the contact lens longer than recommended, you may have discomfort and temporary blurred vision. This is because not enough oxygen gets to the cornea.

Scratch in the eye (corneal abrasion)

You may get a ‘scratch’ on the surface of the cornea if you get dust or other debris under the contact lens. The treatment includes stopping contact lens wear and using antibiotic eye drops. The scratch may also lead to corneal infection if it is left untreated.

Allergic reaction to solutions

Often the eye can become red and irritated if you have an allergic reaction to the cleaning solutions. Treatment includes changing to different solutions.

Giant papillary conjunctivitis (GPC)

This causes itching and redness while wearing the contact lenses. It is an allergic reaction to the lens, often because of the build-up of protein on the lens surface.

To treat this allergic reaction to the lens, you may need to:

- stop using lenses for some time,
- use a protein cleaning system,
- change the lens type or eye drops.

Corneal ulcer

This can be caused by a serious infection of the cornea and can affect your vision.

The risk of corneal ulcer is very low, but you need to be aware of it.

The risk can be reduced by:

- making sure that you follow the cleaning routine strictly,
- not over wearing the lenses,
- not swimming or showering in your lenses,
- not sleeping in them. Unless you have been given a bandage lens and have been advised to sleep in the lens.

Contact lens frequently asked questions (FAQs)

How much will my contact lens cost?

The NHS charge for contact lenses from April 2026 is £61.77 per contact lens, £123.54 for a pair of contact lenses.

For regular replacement lenses, a yearly charge of £61.77

£10 charge for posting out lenses to you.

These charges are updated on the 1st of April each year.

Updated prices or more information on these charges is available from the optometry department.

Who is exempt from payment for contact lenses?

You may be exempt if you:

- have proof of income support or certain other financial benefits,
- need a lens as a ‘bandage’ or cosmetic lens for a blind eye,
- are under 16 years of age,
- are aged between 16 to 19 years and in full-time education,
- have a HC2 or HC3 certificate to show that you are on low income. This may give you full or partial help towards the cost of your contact lenses.

There is no exemption from payment for spare lenses. All patients (including those who are exempt) who break or lose lenses will be charged for replacements.

How do I order replacement contact lenses?

To order replacement lenses, contact the Optometry Unit on: **0116 258 5858**

If only 1 lens needs replacing, please be sure to state if you need a right or left lens. There is an additional £10 charge for postage.

How long will it take to get a replacement lens?

- rigid gas permeable lenses: 2 to 4 weeks
- soft contact lenses: 2 to 4 weeks
- cosmetic soft lenses: 6 weeks
- (larger rigid gas permeable) scleral lenses: 4 to 6 weeks

How can I get contact lens solutions?

Your optometrist will give you a starter pack of solutions at your first fitting of your contact lenses. Contact lens solutions are available from optician's practices, community pharmacies, supermarkets and online. Make sure you continue to use the solutions recommended by your optometrist unless told not to.

You may be suitable for help with the cost of your solutions if you are exempt from paying for your lenses. Please ask for advice at your next visit if you think this maybe the case.

Can my GP prescribe contact lens solutions?

No, they can prescribe eye medication but not contact lens solutions.

Do I need to go to see my local optometrist?

In our contact lens service, we only assess the contact lens and the front of your eyes. We advise you to see your own local optometrist in the community for a routine eye test at least every 2 years. This is for a full eye health and glasses check.

Points to remember to look after your eyes

- Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before putting in or removing your lenses.
- Take care not to catch your eye with your fingernail. Keep your nails clean and short.
- Always use the solutions recommended by your optometrist. Use solutions which are within their expiry date. If in doubt, contact the optometry unit to check which solution is right for your lenses.
- Do not touch the tip of the solution bottles with your finger or lens. You may infect the solution.
- Always close the lid on your solution bottles and keep away from direct sunlight and heat.
- Never allow tap water to come into contact with your lens as this has many germs which can harm your eyes.
- Remember to keep your lens case clean as you were told by your optometrist.
- Replace the lens case at least every 3 months as dirty cases can attract germs which may harm your eyes.
- Always keep your aftercare appointments. If you cannot attend, please call the Optometry Unit to cancel and re-arrange. Missed appointments will lead to you being discharged from the contact lens clinic.
- When attending your contact lens appointment, please come wearing your contact lenses, unless your optometrist has told you not to or if you are having problems which prevent you from wearing them.
- Do not wear your lenses for longer than your optometrist advises.
- Never wear a damaged lens.
- If you need a replacement lens, please contact the Optometry Unit (contact details in the next page).

If I have a problem with the eye, what do I do?

If either eye is red, sticky, or uncomfortable or if you notice that your vision is becoming worse or are concerned about your eyes:

Please contact

Optometry Unit: 0116 258 5858

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Or

Eye casualty at Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 6273

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

Weekends: 8.30am 12.30pm

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہِ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research

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