

# EDUCATIONAL MOMENTS<sup>®</sup>



VISION CARE INSTITUTE

## Conversations with the potential new wearer

by Clair Bulpin and Theresa Cox

### WHY INITIATE A CONTACT LENS CONVERSATION?

**2/3** of contact lens 'considerers' do not feel well informed

Research shows that the benefits of contact lenses (visual performance, freedom and confidence) are not consistently being communicated.

- Only 11% of eye care practitioners discuss contact lenses with all their patients.
- 76% of patients want their practitioners to give them more information.

#### Why should we initiate the contact lens conversation?

If prompted, nearly 9 in 10 (88% of patients) are interested in trialling lenses and one in three will go on to purchase.

If patients don't initiate a contact lens discussion, is it right to assume they are simply not interested?

**It is far more likely that if contact lenses are never offered, patients simply believe they are not suitable candidates.**



#### Who should wear contact lenses?

All patients deserve the opportunity to experience the potential life-changing moment when they experience clear vision without their spectacles for the first time. To do this:

- Give all patients the option of contact lenses
- Avoid being influenced by your own perceived barriers when deciding on your patients' behalf if they are interested or not.
- Remember **part-time wearers** by thinking about your patients as potential contact lens **and** spectacle wearers. Of the vision-correction population only 13% are 'dual wearers' using both forms of correction and a tiny 6% are 'triple wearers' who also have sunglasses.

**A combination of vision correction methods not only offers patients solutions to meet all their needs but has huge potential for your practice and its success.**

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## WHAT TO LOOK AND LISTEN FOR

Our best recommendations come from **personalised advice**. Identify something specific and relevant to the patient that could be helped by wearing contact lenses.

### Lifestyle, hobbies and occupation

Think of the limitations of spectacle correction for the presbyopic electrician trying to see up close while looking upwards, or the 'weather' benefits of contact lenses for the golfer.



*Active lifestyle?*

### Defining moments

Consider important moments in patients' lives such as changing schools, going to college or university, starting work or getting married, when they might benefit from contact lenses.



*Getting married?*



*Outdoor challenges?*



*Changing/leaving school?*

- Look for clues in the patient's appearance. Simply observing how they behave and what they are wearing can tell you a lot about their lifestyle.
- Listen for complaints about 'glasses slipping', 'dents in noses', 'always being aware of the frames', and familiar comments such as: 'It's annoying having to put them on' or 'I'm forever losing my glasses'. The patient who takes forever to choose spectacles because 'nothing looks right' or 'I just don't like wearing glasses' is crying out for another option.

Once you've established rapport, discussion about lifestyle and current satisfaction with spectacles becomes more of an honest, open conversation. A discussion in context, with a real benefit tailored to that individual, will often lead to a different outcome.

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## WHAT TO SAY AND DO

To succeed with getting potential wearers to have a contact lens trial it is important for us to address any barriers that may be present.

### Practice barriers

Most practices are still viewed by patients as 'spectacle shops', having display upon display of frames. Make sure you provide visual prompts about contact lenses throughout the practice.



### Touch & feel test

Fear of touching the eye is the greatest barrier to contact lenses among considerers and ease of handling is the factor that would most encourage lens wear (Ruston D et al. 2012). Giving them the chance to touch lenses helps overcome this barrier.



### Make staff your first contact

Consider, with your staff, a simple question during the booking of appointments: 'Would you like an eye examination, contact lens consultation or both?' Train staff on the benefits of contact lenses and avoid the 'I'll have to check if we can get those in your prescription'.

### While trying on glasses

Offer patients contact lenses to see clearly when choosing their glasses. A study has shown that those offered contact lenses have a 2.5x higher purchase rate for contact lenses and spent more on their glasses too. (Atkins NP et al 2009).



### Overcome comfort concerns

Comfort is a concern among potential contact lens wearers. Counter this by saying 'I'll gently touch your eyelashes to help apply the lens and it may feel a little wet or cool initially'.

### Counter the cost question

Many patients may know little about contact lenses. Cost is a question one can 'sensibly' ask, even if everything else is alien. Compare the daily cost of wearing lenses with something they buy without thinking, such as a coffee or a bottle of water, to put it in context.



Remember that a word such as 'insertion' sounds invasive, 'holding on to your lids' suggests a struggle. Instead, think about more gentle expressions such as 'applying' the lens or 'placing it on'.

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### FURTHER READING

Ewbank A. Who fits contact lenses? Part two. *Optician* 2009;237:6204 16-21. CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS

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Aslam A. Contact lenses and spectacles: a winning combination. *Optician* 2013; 246:6425 26-28. CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS

Aslam A, Sulley A and Packe R. Understanding the motivation of contact lens and spectacle wearers when purchasing vision correction. British Contact Lens Association. Clinical Conference Poster Presentation, 2014.

To read the full published article CLICK [HERE](#)  
Bulpin C & Cox T. Conversations in Practice: the potential new wearer *Optician* 2014; 247:6450 21- 28

#### Acknowledgement



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