

What's new in contact lenses? Prescribing trends reflect new lens materials and designs

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More Americans are using soft contact lenses—especially daily disposable lenses—and taking advantage of new designs targeting vision problems that were difficult to correct with previous contact lenses, reports the July issue of *Optometry and Vision Science*, official journal of the American Academy of Optometry.

Recent prescribing trends reflect ongoing advances in contact lens materials and capabilities, according to the survey study by Nathan Efron, Ph.D., DSc, of Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and colleagues. "This new survey highlights the predominant use of soft [contact lenses](#), the rising popularity of advanced silicone hydrogel materials, and increasing use of toric and multifocal designs and daily disposable lenses," comments Anthony Adams, OD, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief of *Optometry and Vision Science*.

New materials, new designs drive changes in contact lens use

Efron and co-authors summarize the findings of annual surveys of U.S. contact lens practitioners conducted between 2002 and 2014. The analysis included 1,650 completed survey forms, providing data on about 7,700 contact lens fittings.

The results suggest an increase in average patient age, likely reflecting contact lens refitting by long-term users. While the number of men increased somewhat, women still account for nearly two-thirds of contact lens wearers.

Other findings highlight increased use of newer lens materials and designs, developed to promote patient comfort and safety and provide new options for correcting common vision problems:

Continued increases in the use of [soft contact lenses](#). Hard contact lenses now account for less than 10 percent of contact lens fittings. Predominant use of silicon hydrogel lenses—now worn by nearly three-fourths of contact lens users. The currently most popular materials have water content of greater than 60 percent, making the lenses more compatible with the cornea of the eye. Growing popularity of soft toric lenses enabling treatment of astigmatism—focusing difficulties due to imperfections in the curvature of eye structures. Correcting astigmatism was a challenge in the early years of contact lens wear. Increased use of multifocal contact lenses, which can correct both near and distance vision. This is an attractive option for older patients with presbyopia—age-related decreases in close-up focusing. Increased use of daily disposable lenses. Considered the healthiest form of contact lens wear, daily disposable lenses now account for nearly 30 percent of prescriptions. Most lenses are now prescribed every one or two weeks, which avoids problems associated with longer lens replacement times. High use of multipurpose lens care solutions—now used by at least 90 percent of patients. These solutions offer important safety and convenience advantages over previous cleaning and storage systems.

The survey provides new insights into contact lens prescribing trends in the United States—the world's largest contact lens market, with about 38.5 million users. While of obvious interest to vision care professionals and the contact lens industry, the findings also show that consumers are benefiting from ongoing advances in [contact lens](#) materials and designs. Adams adds, "modern contact lenses overcome many of the limitations of previous designs, offering tremendous advantages to our patients in terms of comfort, safety, and vision correction."

More information: [Click here](#) to read "Trends in U.S. Contact Lens Prescribing 2002 to 2014."

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