

Sleeping With Your Contacts In Can Lead To These Scary Injuries, A New CDC Report Says

By CAROLYN DE LORENZO | a day ago |



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Dozing off with our contact lenses in is all too easy sometimes, especially after a long day. But sleeping with your contacts in is actually *super* dangerous. According to LiveScience, about one-third of contact lens users report napping or sleeping with contacts in, but according to research, [sleeping with your contacts lenses in can lead to some scary eye injuries](#). In a study published by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), researchers think they may have pinpointed why [sleeping with contacts in](#) is so dang risky. Apparently, the risk of

corneal infections is scary high when it comes to sleeping with contacts in, and the risk is even higher if contacts are kept in overnight.

Researchers think that the combination of pollutant exposure encountered during the day, decreased oxygen access to the cornea thanks to the contacts themselves, and the lack of eye movement during sleep, create conditions in which bacterial infections become way more likely. LiveScience reports that these [contact-related eye infections](#) are caused by bacteria that infect the cornea of the eye. And the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a report on Aug. 16 stating that [folks who sleep with their contacts in](#) are six to eight times more likely to develop corneal infections than those who don't, LiveScience further reports.

Dr. Ming Wang of Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center tells Bustle via email that contact lenses are totally safe when worn appropriately, but "when they're not, risks can be major and vision threatening." Dr. Wang further warns that eye infections from sleeping in contact lenses can be "painful and aggressive," and may require urgent treatment methods.

Study authors noted in the CDC report that "Among the many behaviors that increase the risk for contact lens-related corneal infection, sleeping with lenses in is one of the riskiest and one of the most commonly reported behaviors adolescent and adult contact lens wearers." So just in case you thought snoozing without taking your lenses out is no big deal, it definitely is. Six cases were reported by the CDC involving patients who slept with their contacts in, and all developed eye infections as a result. Some patients reported permanent vision loss, the need for eye surgery, corneal ulcers, and permanent scarring.

"Cornea specialists [...] agree that sleeping in contact lenses is dangerous, and places one at high risk for infections," Dr. Sumayya Ahmad, a cornea surgeon at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai Health System tells Bustle via email. Dr. Ahmad further explains that the best way to protect your eyes long-term is to either wear daily disposable lenses, or take them out before sleeping and clean and disinfect them well. And always make sure to ditch your lenses by their expiration date.

LiveScience further notes that CDC researchers may have chosen more extreme cases in order to highlight [the dangers of sleeping with your contacts in](#). And it's possible that not all contact lens wearers are as vulnerable to infections as the six presented were. That said, researchers stress that anyone sleeping with their contact lenses is at increased risk of infection and eye injuries, regardless of the type of lens, or how often you doze off with them in.

The CDC authors recommend that "Contact lens wearers can take simple steps to [prevent contact lens-related eye complications](#), such as talking to their doctors about not sleeping or swimming in lenses, and replacing lenses and storage cases when recommended." The CDC authors further note that, when used and cleaned as recommended, contact lenses are totally safe to use. Just make sure to clean them as directed and swap out your storage cases periodically – and definitely make it a point to always remove them before you go to sleep.
