

# Fungal Keratitis



American Optometric Association  
Contact Lens and Cornea Section

## What is fungal keratitis?

Fungal keratitis is a serious and painful corneal disease caused by a fungal organism. Until now, fungal keratitis has rarely been reported in the healthy contact lens wearing population. It typically occurs after trauma associated with plant matter or in immuno-compromised individuals. The higher incidence of fungal keratitis among normal contact lens wearers is a new finding.

### Etiology

The cause of this increased incidence of fungal keratitis is currently under investigation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Symptoms** include blurred vision, a red and painful eye that does not improve when the contact lens is removed, increased sensitivity to light, and excessive tearing or discharge.

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should return to your optometrist immediately.

### Diagnosis

Clinically, it is often difficult to differentiate between fungal and bacterial infections. Confirmation may be obtained by your doctor through corneal culture, corneal tissue biopsy or confocal microscopy.



**Fungal keratitis may appear as a grayish-white lesion with feathery borders. It may be difficult to differentiate from other eye infections, so any red or painful eye should be evaluated by your optometrist immediately.**

### Treatment

Laboratory results take time to get back, so your doctor may place you on antibiotics pending results. Should fungal treatment be warranted, topical or oral anti-fungal agents may be used. In some cases, surgical intervention is necessary.



### 6 Recommendations for Clean and Safe Contact Lens Wear

1. Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses.
2. Carefully and regularly clean contact lenses.
3. Store lenses in clean and proper case. Replace case every 3 months.
4. Use only cleaning products recommended by your optometrist.
5. Never re-use old solution.
6. Replace contact lenses as prescribed by your doctor.

### Symptoms of eye infections:

- Sudden blurred or fuzzy vision.
- Red/ irritated eyes lasting for an unusually long period of time after removal of the contact lens.
- Pain in and around the eyes.
- Increased sensitivity to light.
- Excessive eye tearing or discharge.

## Contact Lenses remain a safe and effective form of vision correction.

As with any medical device, hygiene plays a key role in the safety of the product. Particular attention should be made to the cleanliness of your hands, contact lens case and the contact lens itself. Any contaminants found on these surfaces may get into the eye upon insertion of the lens.

Lenses should be cleaned immediately upon removal from the eye. The lens should be rubbed or rinsed thoroughly before placing in the

lens case. Contact lens solution should be discarded upon opening the case and fresh solution should be used each time the lens is placed in the case. The case should be stored dry between disinfection cycles. The lens case should be replaced every three months to avoid infection.

When not properly cared for, contact lenses have been associated with eye infection. It is important to replace

lenses as prescribed by your doctor, even if proper hygiene measures are being followed.

Always use the solution prescribed by your doctor, switching solutions could result in lens/solution incompatibility, lens discomfort or infection.

By following your optometrist's instructions, you can ensure contact lenses remain a safe and effective form of vision correction.