

# APPLYING THE TEACH-BACK METHOD TO CONTACT LENS CARE

# FACT SHEET

## Health Literacy Challenges with Contact Lens Care

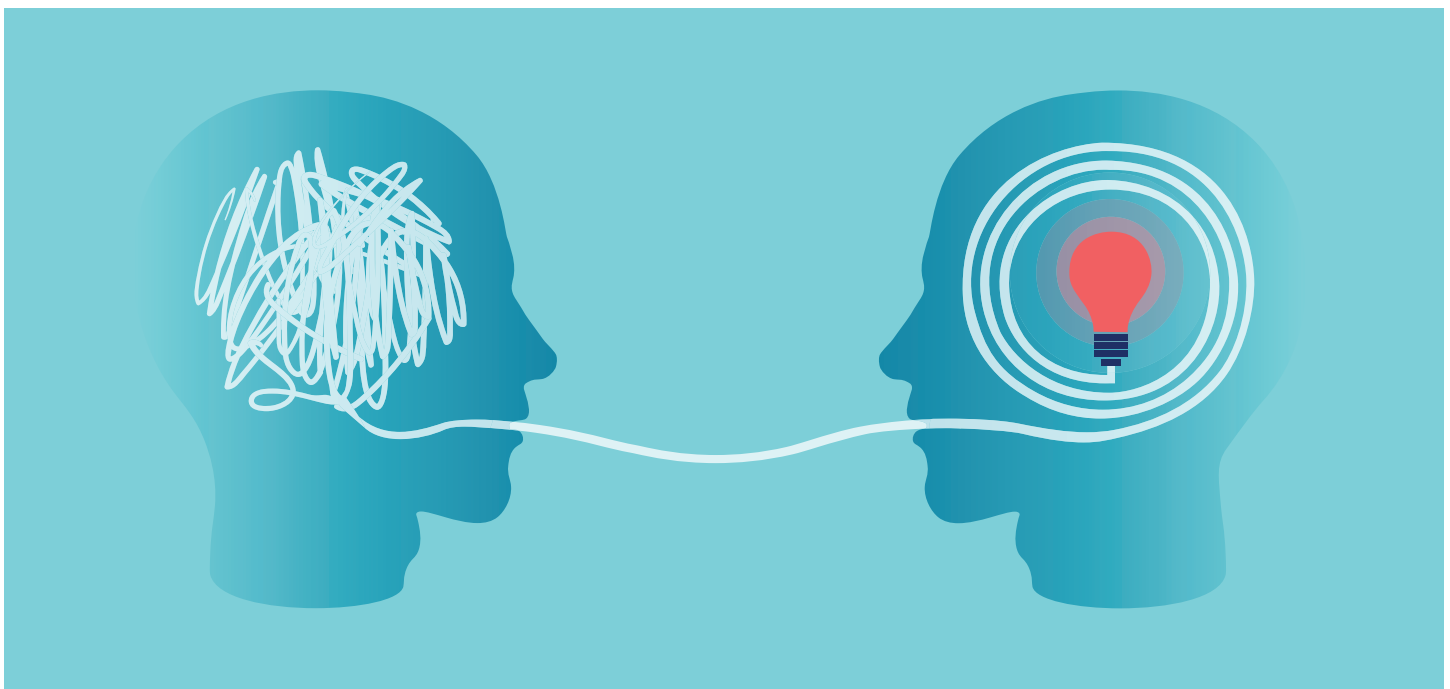
Studies have shown that 40-80% of the medical information patients are told during office visits is forgotten immediately, and nearly half of the information retained is incorrect.<sup>1</sup> A 2019 CDC study states that in 2014, over 99% of contact lens wearers surveyed reported engaging in at least one behavior that puts them at risk for a contact lens-related eye infection, even though a majority of eye care providers reported sharing all nine of the key contact lens wear and care recommendations always or most of the time. To avoid a breakdown in patient-provider communication there are many approaches that can be used, including the “teach-back method.”

## How Doctors of Optometry Can Help by Implementing the Teach-Back Method

The AOA has developed this resource for doctors of optometry and their contact lens care teams. By utilizing the teach-back method doctors and their care teams can ensure that patients understand healthy contact lens wear and care. This approach can improve patient health literacy while allowing doctors to confirm that the way they have communicated important health information to their patient is understood.

## What is the Teach-Back Method?

The teach-back method is “a technique for health care providers to ensure that they have explained medical information clearly so that patients and their families understand what is communicated to them.”<sup>2</sup> By asking patients to state in their own words what they need to know or do about their health, health care providers can confirm that they have communicated information in a way that the patient understands.<sup>3</sup>



## Applying the Teach-Back Method to Contact Lens Care

Doctors of optometry and their contact lens care teams can apply the teach-back method in a variety of ways. The AOA recommends that providers ensure that patients can teach-back the key recommendations for contact lens wear and care, such as:

- Avoid sleeping overnight or napping in lenses\*
- Wash and dry hands before inserting or removing lenses
- Replace lenses as often as recommended
- Replace lens case at least once every three months
- Avoid storing lenses in tap water\*
- Avoid rinsing lenses in tap water\*
- Avoid “topping off” disinfecting solution\*
- Avoid swimming in lenses\*
- Avoid showering in lenses\*

The AOA also recommends that providers teach patients to protect their lenses and cases from bacteria by storing them outside of the bathroom or in a closed cabinet away from the toilet, and to avoid disposing lenses down the sink or flush them down the toilet, due to the burden of plastic in the water supply.

*\*The CDC has determined that sleeping in lenses, topping off solution, and exposing lenses to water are the three most risky behaviors for contact lens wearers. Therefore, confirming that patients can teach-back their understanding of these top risky behaviors is key.*

One way for doctors of optometry to utilize the teach-back method for contact lens care is to ask their patients, “Tell me what you are going to do to care for your eyes and your contact lenses when you get home.” This gives patients an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned, and to ask questions if anything they teach-back is not quite right. It also gives doctors the chance to explain information in a new way if they see that their patient is struggling to understand.

The related “show-me” method also can be used, especially for younger patients or first-time contact lens wearers. Doctors of optometry can ask patients to demonstrate proper contact lens care by imitating the motions of washing and drying their hands, inserting a contact lens, taking the lens out and rinsing it in contact lens solution. Doctors could say, “Sometimes remembering the steps to keep your eyes healthy can be tricky. Can you show me how you are going to use your contacts?”

Checking patient understanding through accurate recall of healthy contact lens behavior can improve patient satisfaction and outcomes. An added bonus of using the teach-back method is that it gives credit to doctors of optometry for an improvement activity under the Medicare Merit-Based Incentive Payment System.<sup>4</sup>

For additional information on how to use teach-back effectively, see 10 Elements of Competence for Using Teach-back Effectively.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Use the Teach-Back Method: Tool #5. Content last reviewed February 2015. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. <https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlittoolkit2-tool5.html>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/patient-family-engagement/pfeprimarycare/interventions/teach-back.html>

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

<sup>4</sup><https://qpp.cms.gov/mips/explore-measures/improvement-activities?search=teach>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.teachbacktraining.org/assets/files/PDFS/Teach%20Back%20-%2010%20Elements%20of%20Competence.pdf>