

PROPER CONTACT LENS DISPOSAL

FACT SHEET

As doctors of optometry, we have a responsibility to our patients to educate them on how best to care for their contact lenses and their eye health. This includes educating patients regarding safe choices for disposing of their worn lenses. Your patients may have concerns about what to do with used lenses and packaging.

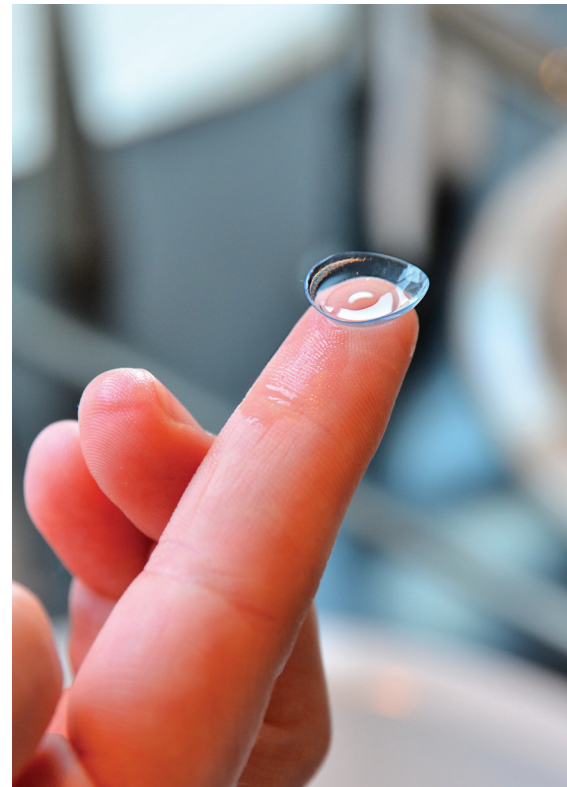
Did you know:*

- 45 million people in the U.S. wear contact lenses
- 15 to 20 percent of contact wearers flush lenses down the sink or toilet
- An estimated 6 - 10 metric tons of plastic lenses end up in wastewater in the U.S. each year

- In wastewater treatment, contact lenses likely breakdown to form microplastics
- Microplastics pose a risk to aquatic organisms, marine animals, and eventually the entire food supply

The Contact Lens and Cornea Section is a nationally recognized section of the American Optometric Association. The CLCS serves its members by providing leadership, education, advice and guidance in contact lenses, anterior segment management, and refractive technologies. To learn more and join the CLCS, visit aoa.org/joinCLCS.

* Source: Biodesign Institute Center for Environmental Health Engineering at Arizona State University (ASU), presented to American Chemical Society, August 2018.



To help keep your patients' vision AND our planet healthy, AOA CLCS offers some useful tips.

- Remind your patients never to flush lenses down the sink or toilet.
- Inform patients about recycling programs that are available especially for contact lenses and their packaging: www.TerraCycle.com. Your practice can even become a recycling drop-off site.
- Know the products. Most contact lenses packs are stamped with number 5 for recycling. Notify patients to ensure that foil on the top is removed, and that the plastic is clean.
- Don't forget that boxes and cleaning solution bottles may be recyclable as well. Contact lens cases should be replaced regularly, but they can be repurposed in many creative ways.
- As always, remind your patients of the importance of washing and drying their hands before handling their contact lenses.



DISPOSE OF CONTACT LENSES PROPERLY!



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Used contact lenses and all their packaging can be recycled through innovative programs at TerraCycle.com. Boxes and cleaning solution bottles may be recyclable in your regular municipal recycling; check local guidelines.

This free, reproducible infographic can be used in your practice, on your website and social media channels to educate your patients on proper contact lens disposal. To access, visit aoa.org/optometrists/tools-and-resources/toolkits-and-practice-resources/public-education-and-campaign-materials.