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.  
- Even though the materials contact lenses, blister packs and top foils are made with are recyclable, they are too small to be recycled through standard recycling bins. Encourage patients to recycle these materials through the ONE by ONE Recycling program through TerraCycle.com. Your practice can even become a recycling drop-off site.  
- While contact lenses, blister packs and top foils need to go through TerraCycle to be properly recycled, the cardboard contact lens packaging (i.e. boxes), contact lens cases and cleaning solution bottles can be recycled through standard recycling bins.  
- 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. They should also always use a contact lens disinfecting solution—never water or saliva—to clean them each time they are removed.
**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.

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