

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTACT LENS PRESCRIPTIONS



WHAT IS A CONTACT LENS PRESCRIPTION?

A contact lens prescription provides all of the information necessary to provide you with contact lenses. Contact lens prescriptions are derived specifically from a contact lens evaluation based on what brand fits your eyes properly. They are not simple calculations from a glasses prescription. Unlike glasses prescriptions, contact lens prescriptions require – at minimum – information about the material, shape, and size of the contact lens.

WHEN CAN I RECEIVE MY PRESCRIPTION?

A contact lens prescription will be provided to you once the contact lens evaluation has been completed. This often requires one or more follow-up visits to make sure the lenses are fitting well and you are likely to be successful wearing the lenses. This process is also referred to as the “contact lens fitting.”

WHAT IS A CONTACT LENS EVALUATION?

A contact lens evaluation is the process by which a lens is determined to be the correct match for your eyes based upon the shape of the lens and the shape of the eye. The only way to determine if a lens fits your eye correctly is through observation by your eye doctor through a special type of microscope. A lens can feel great but it does not mean that it fits your eye properly and it can still cause damage to your eye. An evaluation can take 2 – 4 visits depending on the complexity of your individual situation. Your eyes, like every part of your body, will continue to change, which is why you need to have the fit of your lenses checked annually to ensure a safe wearing experience.

FOR HOW LONG IS MY PRESCRIPTION VALID?

This depends upon the law in your state but is often one year. If this is the case, your prescription will expire one year from the day it was issued.

WHAT IS THE FAIRNESS TO CONTACT LENS CONSUMERS ACT?

The Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act (FCLCA) is a law that was passed to improve consumers' ability to purchase contact lenses from the source of their choice. The Contact Lens Rule includes the regulations which implement the FCLCA. The law and accompanying regulations require prescribers to give patients a copy of their contact lens prescriptions at the end of a contact lens fitting. Once a patient has their contact lens prescription they can go to any seller and present their valid prescription to purchase lenses. If the patient does not present their prescription to the seller, the seller must verify the



prescription with the prescribing physician before selling the lenses. The prescriber then has eight business hours to respond to the verification request or the seller can automatically provide the lenses to the patient. For more information, you can go to: <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/contact-lens-rule-guide-prescribers-sellers>

DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR MY CONTACT LENS PRESCRIPTION?

Your doctor of optometry will typically charge a fee for evaluating the fit of your contact lenses in order to provide the best lenses for you. This is often referred to as the “fitting fee” and is separate from the fee for your eye examination. Your doctor of optometry may also charge you for trial lenses if they are necessary to complete the evaluation process. This is sometimes the case with some “specialty” or custom-made lenses. Your doctor of optometry, however, cannot charge you a separate fee for giving you a copy of your prescription or require you to purchase contact lenses as a condition of receiving your prescription. However, a prescriber may require full payment of all fees prior to giving you a copy of your prescription, if the doctor routinely requires payment at the time of the visit from all patients.

DOES IT MATTER WHERE I PURCHASE MY CONTACT LENSES?

The most important factor is that you obtain your lenses from a reputable source and that you receive the exact lenses and parameters that your doctor prescribed. Your doctor of optometry will ensure that you receive the correct lenses, and with annual checkups, will make sure that your lenses are still the right fit for you.

THIS INFORMATION IS BEING PROVIDED TO YOU BY YOUR DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE CONTACT LENS AND CORNEA SECTION OF THE AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION AND IS COMMITTED TO YOUR EYE HEALTH, CONTACT LENS CARE, AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW.

¹Carnt NA, Evans VE, Naduvilath TJ, et al. Contact lens-related adverse events and the silicone hydrogel lenses and daily wear care system used. Arch Ophthalmol 2009;127:1616-23.

²Cheng KH, Leung SL, Hoekman HW, et al. Incidence of contact-lens-associated microbial keratitis and its related morbidity. Lancet 1999;354:181-5.

³Stapleton F, Edwards K, Keay L, et al. Risk factors for moderate and severe microbial keratitis in daily wear contact lens users. Ophthalmology 2012;119:1516-21.