

Nearly 9 in 10 contact lens wearers admit to sleeping in their lenses despite risks, new study reveals

Experts warn common habit could significantly increase risk of serious eye infection.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, June 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Almost nine in 10 contact lens wearers admit to sleeping in their lenses – a habit eye specialists warn could significantly increase the risk of serious infection.

[New research](#) from leading eye clinic Oculase, based on a survey of 300 contact lens users, found that 88% of people have slept in their contact lenses, with 16% doing so regularly and more than 70% occasionally.



9 in 10 wearers have slept in their lenses, Oculase Contact Lens Study 2026

Despite clinical guidance advising against it, the findings suggest that sleeping in lenses has become a widely accepted – and underestimated – behaviour.

“

Many people think sleeping in lenses occasionally is harmless because they don't experience immediate symptoms – but repeated overnight wear can increase the risk of serious infection over time.”

Tariq Ayoub

[Tariq Ayoub](#), founder of [Oculase – The Eye Clinic](#), explains: “Sleeping in contact lenses reduces oxygen to your cornea, leaving the surface stressed, slightly swollen, and more fragile.

“Without blinking, tears don't refresh – so debris and microbes get trapped against the eye.

“That combination makes infection, including microbial

keratitis, much more likely and potentially sight threatening.”

The study also revealed that risky behaviours extended beyond sleep:

- 79% of respondents said they wear lenses in the shower
- 61% wear them while swimming or in hot tubs
- More than half (53%) admit to rinsing lenses or cases with tap water

Together, these habits significantly increase exposure to harmful microorganisms that can lead to serious infection. Sadiq Zaman, an optometrist in East London says: “What’s striking is how normalised these behaviours have become. Many patients are genuinely surprised to learn that habits like showering or sleeping in lenses can increase infection risk.”

A ‘normal’ habit with serious consequences

While many wearers see sleeping in lenses as harmless – especially if done occasionally – experts say even short periods can reduce oxygen to the eye and increase the risk of complications.

The survey found that contact lens discomfort is already widespread:

- More than half of respondents reported dry eyes, redness or irritation.
- Two-thirds (67%) said they had stopped wearing lenses due to discomfort or an eye problem.

Andy, a contact lens wearer from London, says: “I used to fall asleep in them and didn’t think it was a big deal until one day I woke up with a red, painful eye.

“I saw the ophthalmologist immediately who confirmed I had a contact lens infection.”

Lack of awareness around serious infections

The findings also highlight a major awareness gap. More than 80% of respondents had never heard of *acanthamoeba* keratitis – a rare but sight-threatening infection linked to contact lens use.

Experts say many of these risks are preventable with better awareness and safer behaviours. “The reassuring part is that most of these cases are preventable with simple habits,” says Mr Ayoub. “Avoid water exposure, clean lenses properly, and replace them as advised. If you develop red eyes or photosensitivity see your eye doctor immediately.”

[ENDS]

About this study

This page summarises findings from Oculase’s 2026 contact lens safety study, conducted among 300 UK contact lens wearers. The data and commentary may be referenced with attribution to

Oculase.

Sample size: 300 contact lens wearers aged 18–64

Location: United Kingdom

Fieldwork: March 2026

Method: Online survey via Pollfish

Access the raw data:: <https://oculase.com/blog/contact-lens-study-2026/>

About Oculase – The Eye Clinic

Oculase is a leading consultant-led eye clinic specialising in advanced treatments including cataract surgery, laser vision correction, and dry eye care. With clinics across London and Hertfordshire, Oculase is committed to helping patients see clearly and safely through expert-led care.

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