



## COVID-19 EYE HEALTH QUESTIONS

There is a lot of information being shared – some true and some misleading – related to Coronavirus/COVID-19. To help understand a few of the key questions we've received related to eye care, EyeMed consulted with our medical director, Dr. John Lahr, O.D.

### **IS COVID-19 TRANSMITTED THROUGH THE EYES?**

While there is no agreed-upon evidence that indicates COVID-19 is transmitted directly through the eyes, it is possible. And limiting eye exposure can help. Here's why:

- When a sick person coughs, sneezes, or talks, virus particles can spray from their mouth into another person's face. You're most likely to inhale these droplets through your mouth or nose, but it is possible for them to enter through your eyes and then into your nasal passage
- People who have coronavirus can also spread the virus through their tears. Touching tears or a surface where tears have landed can be another portal to infection
- Last, you can also become infected by touching something that has the virus on it – like a table or doorknob – and then touching your eyes

Proper eye health and use of proper hygiene are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to aid in protection.

### **DO GLASSES PROTECT AGAINST COVID-19?**

Wearing glasses may add a layer of protection. Corrective lenses or sunglasses can shield your eyes from infected respiratory droplets. But they don't provide 100% security. The virus can still reach your eyes from the exposed sides, tops and bottoms of your glasses. If you're caring for a sick patient or potentially exposed person, safety goggles may offer a stronger defense.

### **IS IT SAFE TO WEAR CONTACT LENSES?**

Contact lens wearers touch their eyes more than the average person – increasing the risk of their eyes being a potential portal for diseases. One option is to consider wearing glasses more often, especially if you tend to touch your eyes frequently when your contacts are in. Substituting glasses for contact lenses can also decrease irritation and force you to pause before touching your eyes.

If you wish to continue wearing contact lenses, it's critical that you follow proper hygiene and care for your contact lenses as prescribed by your eye care professional. NOTE: You should discontinue wearing contact lenses if you're sick irrespective of the type of illness.



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### **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROTECT YOUR EYES WHILE WEARING CONTACT LENSES?**

Here are the general guidelines for handling your contacts using proper hygiene:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or longer and dry them with a lint-free towel before handling your contacts. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your face, including your eyes, nose and mouth, with unwashed hands.
- Follow your eye care professional's schedule for wearing and replacing your contacts.

"Coronavirus Eye Safety." American Academy of Ophthalmology. 3 March 2020. Web.

"Contact Lens Wear during COVID-19" American Optometric Association. March 2020. Web.

"Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. March 2020. Web.