

**The Optometric Trends Discovery Group's
2023 Report on**

Contact Lenses: INSIGHTS & TRENDS

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Contact lenses require the expert involvement of optometrists, who are responsible for prescribing and fitting them according to an individual's specific vision requirements and eye health. We offer vital advice on the correct usage, care, and maintenance of contact lenses to avert potential eye infections and other related issues.

This report delves into findings from the 2023 Optometric Trends Discovery Group (OTDG) Survey, offering a deep dive into the clinical practice patterns and opinions of US optometrists as they relate to contact lenses.

Contact Lens Compliance and Hygiene

Contact lenses are a major part of most optometric practices. Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents see patients for contact lenses (fittings and follow-up), with the average seeing 18 patients per week, though numbers varied widely.

Patient adherence to lens replacement schedules and hygienic practices can be just as crucial as office visits. Figure 1 shows the average estimated compliance rates to the replacement schedules for various types of contact lenses, highlighting that compliance is believed to be highest with daily disposables. For other lens types, compliance rates are generally observed between 51% and 60%. Research corroborates high compliance levels with daily disposable lenses, which are considered the cleanest

and healthiest option. Overall, however, these numbers strike me as overly optimistic relative to the rates reported in the literature.

The observed variation in compliance rates, along with the low adherence to handwashing protocols as reported in studies, leads to an intriguing observation: respondents estimate that approximately 22% of patients develop infiltrates, irrespective of whether they use 2–4-week daily replacement or daily disposable lenses. With safe and healthy contact lens wear, hopefully patients will not develop corneal infiltrates at all. This situation presents an opportunity to recommend daily disposable contact lenses to patients, as they are recognized as the cleanest and healthiest option available.



FIGURE 1. What percentage of your patients regularly comply with their replacement schedule for _____?

Contact Lens Intolerance

The survey inquired about the age at which their patients become contact lens intolerant, with the average response being 49 years old. This figure is notably higher than the literature which reports that patients discontinue or drop out of contact lenses in the mid-30s to 40s, and by the time they hit their 50s or 60s have probably already dropped out of contact lenses.

As shown in Figure 2, comfort (54%) was the main reason for contact lens intolerance, with no other option cited by more than 20%. This is something that we can work through with patients to find the most comfortable options so that they remain in contact lenses.

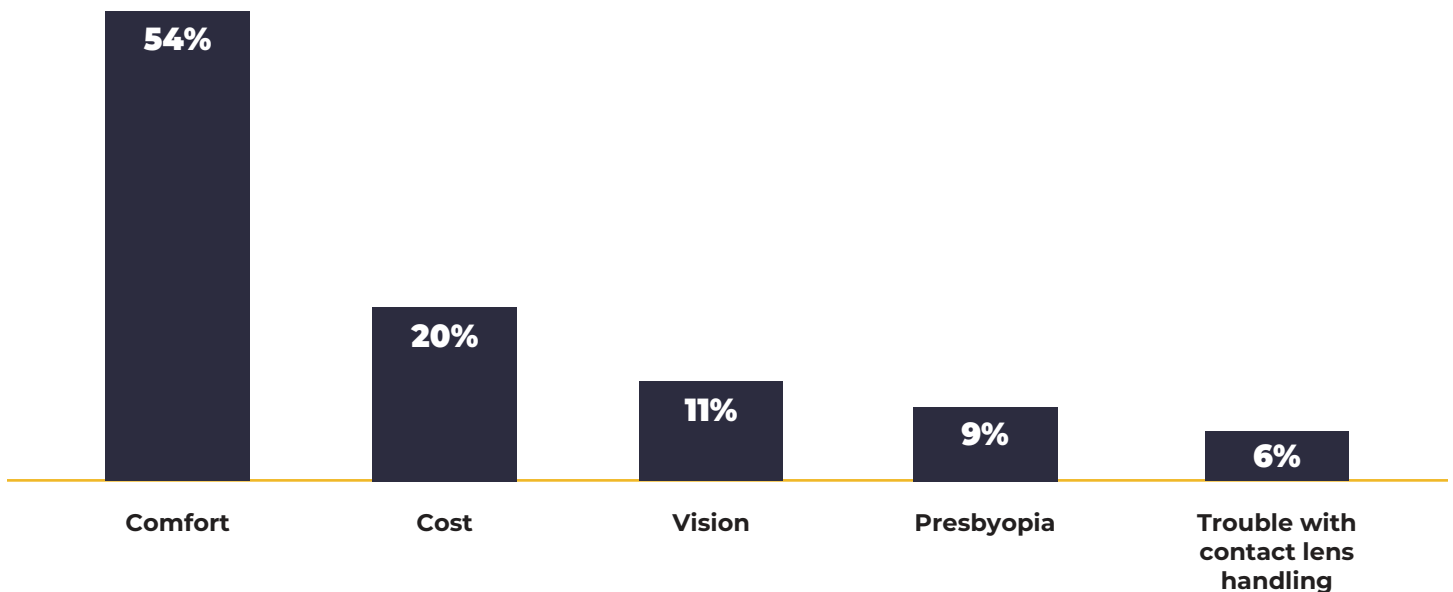


FIGURE 2. What is the primary reason your patients become contact lens intolerant?

Toric contact lenses

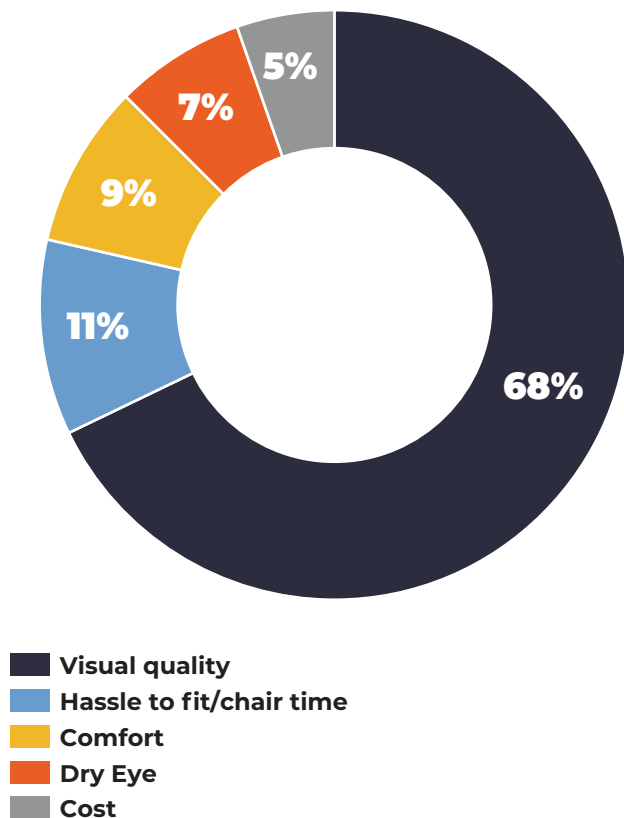
Survey findings revealed that 45% of contact lenses fitted by respondents are toric, which is higher than I would expect given only a third of the population has astigmatism. More in line with the literature is the fact that a majority suggested fitting toric contact lenses for astigmatism levels of 0.75D (52%) or higher, with 38% recommending 1.0D or more. What is surprising is that 4% recommend a toric contact lens at 2.0D or higher. Toric lenses should be recommended far before 2.0D of astigmatism to optimize vision.

Most respondents, 62%, believe that 5-10 degrees of rotation are acceptable before it affects visual quality and acuity. There is some nuance here as the rotation of a toric lens is dependent on the amount of astigmatism present. For example, if a patient has 5 diopters of astigmatism and the lens rotates 10 degrees, it may or may not make a difference. If a patient has 3.5 diopters of astigmatism and the lens rotates 10 degrees, this will make a huge difference.

Treating Presbyopes with Contact lenses

Respondents were asked what percentage of their presbyopia patients are fitted with either multifocal or monovision contact lenses. Only 41% of patients with presbyopia are provided with multifocal contact lenses, marginally higher than the 36% fit with monovision. I was genuinely surprised given that many studies indicate the superiority of multifocal lenses over monovision lenses. Most studies report that multifocal lenses outperform monovision contact lenses most of time, so this seems like a missed opportunity, as there's a significant potential to fit more patients with these lenses, especially now with the availability of high-quality multifocal designs.

“There’s a significant potential to fit more patients with [multifocal] lenses, especially now with the availability of high-quality multifocal designs.”



Checking the dominant eye is important when fitting contact lenses for individuals with presbyopia. The sensory method is the most accurate way to check dominant eye. However, the majority of practitioners in the survey (65%) responded that the sighting method was used to check dominant eye. Sensory and sighting dominance does not always correlate. Thus, measuring sensory dominance for multifocal contact lens success is important.

As shown in Figure 3, 68% of respondents cited visual quality as the biggest barrier to fitting patients with presbyopia in contact lenses. No other option was selected by more than 11%. This is unexpected given the high-quality multifocal designs available today. The latest multifocal lens designs promise clear vision at all distances: near, intermediate, and far.

FIGURE 3. What is the biggest barrier to fitting patients with presbyopia in contact lenses?

Did you KNOW?



Respondents believe that

62%

of daily wear reusable soft contact lens patients are regularly compliant with their recommended cleaning protocol



66%

of respondents believe that patients need to discontinue contact lens wear for one to two weeks prior to cataract or refractive surgery



88%

of respondents fit soft contact lenses, making them by far the most commonly used type



53%

of respondents indicated visual fluctuations/blur/rotation stability was the biggest barrier to fitting toric contact lenses

A

68%

of respondents indicated visual quality was the biggest barrier to contact lenses for patients with presbyopia

The Optometric Trends Discovery Group

(OTDG) Survey was launched on February 4, 2023. The survey included 141 questions developed and reviewed with the OTDG leadership board. The survey questions explored doctors' understanding and current practice patterns across a number of areas of optometric care, including presbyopia, astigmatism, corneal therapeutics, ocular surface disease, glaucoma, lid management, corneal refractive surgery, dry AMD and geographic atrophy, and myopia management.



Nearly 300 optometrists responded to the survey which was closed in mid-March 2023. You can access interpretive reports on additional OTDG topics as they are released by visiting otdg.tfgeducation.com or scanning the QR code.



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Meet the Author

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Dr. Melissa Barnett is Director of Optometry at the University of California, Davis. She is an internationally recognized key opinion leader, specializing in dry eye disease, specialty contact lenses, and presbyopia.

Dr. Barnett lectures globally and publishes extensively on topics including dry eye, anterior segment disease, contact lenses, presbyopia, and creating a healthy balance between work and home life for women in optometry.

She is Past Chair of the American Optometric Association Contact Lens and Cornea Section, a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Diplomate of the American Board of Certification in Medical Optometry, a Fellow and Global Ambassador of the British Contact Lens Association, serves on the Board of the Gas Permeable Lens Institute, International Society of Contact Lens Specialists and is Past President of The Scleral Lens Education Society.

Dr. Melissa Barnett and Lynette Johns authored and edited the book *Contemporary Scleral Lenses: Theory and Application* with the unique perspectives and contributions of international experts. Dr. Barnett most recently chaired the BCLA CLEAR report on scleral lenses. She is currently serving on the Tear Film & Ocular Surface Society (TFOS): A Lifestyle Epidemic Ocular Surface Disease Workshop.

Dr. Barnett was awarded the inaugural Theia Award for Excellence for Mentoring by Women in Optometry. She was granted the Most Influential Women in Optical from Vision Monday.

In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, yoga, hiking and spending time with family.