

COVID-19 & Eyehealth FAQs

Q: Can COVID-19 be transmitted through the eyes?

A: Yes, the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through droplets landing on the surface of the eye from a carrier's cough or sneeze.

It is important to avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth as the virus can be transmitted through contact with contaminated surfaces.

In addition to washing your hands after visiting the toilet, it is important to wash your hands more often especially:

- when you get to work or your destination or arrive home, particularly if you use public transport
- after you blow your nose, cough or sneeze
- before you eat or handle food

Public Health England advises that you should wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds, using soap and water or hand sanitiser. For more information on effective hand hygiene see the World Health Organisation's Guide

Q: Are contact lens wearers more at risk of infection when they insert and take out their lenses?

A: Thorough hand hygiene is always recommended when inserting and taking out contact lenses to maintain eye health. Where possible, we are advising contact lens wearers to wear glasses when outside of the home environment. Wearing glasses will decrease the urge to rub or touch the eyes. Glasses will not prevent infection but may act as a physical shield or defence from airborne

water droplets from others' coughs and sneezes.

Q: What would you recommend in terms of best practice for eye hygiene?

A: To clean your eyes safely:

- always wash and rinse your hands thoroughly
- use an antibacterial eye cleansing wipe or gel
- wipe your eyes from the inside edge to the outer edge of your eye.
- avoid cross contamination from one eye to another by using a single wipe, or fresh pump of gel per eye
- avoid sharing eye cosmetics
- regularly wash make-up brushes
- dispose of out of date cosmetics, particularly those that are used on or around the eyes.

As well as reducing the risk of infection, daily eyelid hygiene is essential to preventing ocular surface diseases such as dry eye, blepharitis and meibomian gland dysfunction.

Q: Is it safe to attend my appointment with my optometrist or optician?

A: If you are concerned about your appointment we advise that you check with your eye health professional prior to the appointment and discuss any worries you may have.

If you have an emergent eye health issue that needs medical attention try to speak to your healthcare professional by phone in the first instance.