

# Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

## Debunking 6 Contact Lens Myths

Millions of people consider contacts a small—albeit essential—part of their daily routine. But if you've never used them, the thought of putting a piece of plastic over your eye may make you squirm.

If you're wondering whether contacts might scratch your eye or get lost, we're here to set the record straight. Below are six common misconceptions about contact lenses to put your mind at ease.

**Myth: A contact lens can get stuck behind your eye.**

**Fact:** This is one of the scariest contact lens myths—and fortunately, it's also impossible. A membrane over your eye connects to the inside of your eyelids, which blocks a contact lens from getting behind your eye.

**Myth: My vision is too poor to wear contact lenses.**

**Fact:** Contact lens technology has advanced greatly since its roots dating back to the 1500s. Virtually anyone nowadays can wear contacts, even if you have a highly complex prescription.

**Myth: Contact lenses can scratch and injure your eye.**

**Fact:** You may experience occasional discomfort when wearing contact lenses, but scratching your eye is rare. Wearing your contacts as directed should prevent any pain and discomfort. If you're experiencing problems, call your eye care provider.

**Myth: You should take contact lens breaks to let your eyes "breathe."**

**Fact:** This is another myth busted by advancements in contact lens technology. Today's soft lenses are made of breathable materials, so you may wear them every day without causing any harm to your eyes (unless, of course, your eye doctor tells you otherwise).

**Myth: Contact lenses can stick to your eye.**

**Fact:** If you wear and care for your contact lenses as your eye doctor instructs, this shouldn't occur. Always remove your contacts before you go to bed (unless your eye doctor tells you differently), and clean and store them properly each day. Also, following your replacement schedule will keep your lenses feeling soft and moisturized.

**Myth: Contact lenses make you susceptible to eye infections.**

**Fact:** The thought of touching your eye may make you wonder about infection risk, but this is rare. Washing your hands before applying or taking out your contact lenses, and sticking to a daily cleaning schedule will help prevent any contact lens-related infections.

Learning how to use and care for contact lenses is easier than you think. Talk to your eye doctor about getting started with contacts. Your optometrist can answer any questions and bust any other contact lens myths.

## Sources

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## Dental X-rays for Kids: What Parents Need to Know

X-rays are one of the most important diagnostic tools in a dental office—they illuminate problems that dentists can't see with the naked eye. But x-rays also pose risks that patients should understand.

X-ray technology emits radiation, which can cause damage over time. That begs the question: If children are getting regular dental x-rays from the time they're very young, will that pose problems for them as they grow older? Dr. Jeffrey Chaffin, dental director for Delta Dental of Iowa, weighed in on this important topic and shared some strategies parents can use to protect their kids from overexposure.

### **Just Because It's Covered, Doesn't Mean It's Needed**

Even if your dental plan covers multiple x-rays a year, that doesn't mean you need them. The American Dental Association (ADA) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) say kids and adults at low risk for tooth decay and gum disease require fewer x-rays—even as infrequently as every 3 years.

“Radiographs should be risk based—meaning that if insurance covers x-rays every two years, they shouldn't necessarily be taken every two years,” Dr. Chaffin said. “It should be personalized and risk based for each patient.”

Dental x-rays should happen after a dentist has viewed your child's teeth and determined that he or she needs more information.

### **Imaging Gently: How Dentists Are Curbing Radiation Exposure**

If your dentist finds it necessary to order an x-ray, it could be the difference maker in addressing your child's dental issue early before it becomes a major problem. When you consider the benefits of x-ray, the radiation risk is much smaller.

Even so, Dr. Chaffin said dentists are expected to follow the ALARA principle—or “As Low As Reasonably Achievable”—when using x-ray. This means dentists should only order what is absolutely necessary to make a diagnosis.

Another way dentists are addressing this concern is through the Imaging Gently initiative, which is aimed at protecting children from unnecessary radiation exposure from imaging exams like x-ray. Imaging Gently urges health care providers to use x-rays based on individual needs and not as a routine practice, and to “child-size” exposure time.

Additionally, digital x-ray is becoming more popular among dentists across the country. Dr. Chaffin said digital x-ray produces less radiation than traditional x-ray, so it reduces your child’s exposure. Talk to your dentist to see if he or she uses this type of technology.

### **What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids from Overexposure**

Parents are encouraged to share their questions and concerns about radiation exposure to their dentist.

“As parents, it’s important to be aware of the recommendations and communicate to your provider that you aren’t against x-rays but want to minimize the use,” Dr Chaffin said.

As a parent, you should be involved in health care decisions that impact your child, and that includes dental x-rays. Work alongside your dentist to strike the right balance to set your child on the right path toward optimal oral and overall health.

