

## Color Contact Lenses

Leonardo Divinci conceptualized contact lenses. However, contact lens wear has only been in vogue for the past century. Color contact lenses were introduced in the late 1930s when a Metro Goldwyn Meyer (MGM) makeup artist approached a Beverly Hills ophthalmologist about changing an actor's eye color from brown to blue in an upcoming movie. The movie, "*Miracles for Sale*," made history as the first to utilize color-tinted contacts cosmetically. Since then, color contact lenses have made hundreds of movie effects possible. Not only did color contact lenses allow moviemakers to change an actor's eye color from brown to blue or blue to green.

Color contacts opened a wide door for makeup artists who could implement characteristics for actors beyond eye color. For instance, color contacts or decorative lenses were used to portray blind eyes—think Audrey Hepburn in the movie "*Wait Until Dark*." Frightening eyes were also made possible through cosmetic lenses, as was the case with the late Michael Jackson's music video, "*Thriller*." Today the use of decorative lenses is commonplace in the making of movies. However, you do not have to be a movie star to wear color contact lenses.

Just as the name implies, [color contact lenses](#) are tinted to change the appearance of the eye's color. Adherence to a few guidelines makes them safe to wear and available in the same categories as non-tinted contact lenses. In other words, color lenses provide the same benefits to eye health (correct near and farsightedness) and are available in soft or [rigid gas-permeable](#) varieties. The same rules that govern the safe wear of regular contact lenses apply to color contact lenses. There are a few things to remember if you are considering wearing colored contacts for the first time or contemplating switching from clear contacts.

### Tints and Colors

Changing blue eyes to appear brown, or vice versa, is easily achieved. Normal eye colors are readily available. However, imaginative colors are also available to contact wearers. For instance, *mirror-tinted contacts* provide a silvery tint to the eyes by removing the apparent look of the pupil. So, you can see just about anything goes regarding color and tint. In the blink of an eye, your eye's appearance can be altered with color/decorative lenses. There are, however, a few constants regarding contact colors.

- **Visibility tinted contacts** will not change the appearance of your eye color. The contacts are tinted just enough that the wearer can identify them when placed in lens solution. Visibility-tinted contacts allow the wearer to find the contact easily enough if it is dropped. The faint tinting is for handling purposes.
- **Enhancement tint contacts** are the same color as your eyes—just, slightly intensified. These contacts perform as indicated by their name, using a slightly darker color than your eyes; enhancement tint contacts enhance the eye's natural color.
- **Color tint contacts** are for individuals who wish to completely change their eye color appearance with deep colors. Cosmetic or decorative contacts fall under this category and can even change the appearance of the pupil's shape.

Please look for a licensed eye health professional if you are interested in wearing color contact lenses. Even if vision correction is unnecessary, a prescription **is** for optimum comfort and eye health. **Plano color** contacts are available for wearers who want the enjoyment of color lenses but do not need correction. However, a professional should measure your eyes for a comfortable fit, and this will prevent eye abrasions and other sight problems.

**Color contact lenses are also known as decorative or cosmetic lenses.**

Contact lenses are federally regulated. However, the FDA has warned consumers about misusing decorative and cosmetic lenses. Color lenses are categorized as decorative cosmetic lenses, and unfortunately, there have been reports of their misuse, resulting in harmful effects on wearers. The problem is disreputable vendors often sell these types of lenses. Shady dealers market the lenses as beauty and cosmetic products or fashion accessories. Buyers should beware of sellers that bill color or decorative lenses in this manner. Do not purchase lenses from any vendor that bills the product as “*one size fits all*.” Like all contacts, an eye care professional must fit color or decorative lenses to your eyes. Just because lenses change the appearance of eyes with the use of color or that eyes are made to look like cat’s eyes, it is necessary to recognize that color lenses are not toys or fashion accessories. Consumers should be wary of sellers that refer to color lenses in this way. Color and other decorative lenses are not beauty products, and anyone who sells them as such is breaking the law.

### **Dangers and risks associated with decorative lenses**

Over-the-counter contact lenses pose a danger to consumers since a prescription is not required for their purchase. This is not only dangerous but also illegal. Contact lenses cannot legally be sold without a prescription in the United States. This is for a good reason. Without a prescription, consumers run the risk of harming their eyes. Like all contact lenses, color, and decorative lenses are considered medical tools or devices. An eye care specialist must fit lenses into the eyes. An ophthalmologist or optometrist will first examine a client’s eyes, determine the prescription strength necessary and measure the cornea to ensure the correct fit. Even if you have 20/20 vision, get an exam before purchasing and placing contacts in your eyes. Also, make a follow-up appointment with your licensed eye care professional. A perfect fit will guard against painful effects and even permanent damage. Failure to get an eye exam and prescription for contact lenses may result in one or more of the following symptoms:

- Abrasions to the cornea, pupil, or iris
- Corneal ulcers
- Eye infections
- Blood vessels that penetrate the cornea
- Loss of eyesight

If you have purchased a pair of color contact lenses without a prescription or have experienced problems, register a complaint with the [Food and Drug Administration](#). Vendors who sell color and decorative lenses illegally are subject to a \$16,000 fine per offense.

Please remember that the problem is not with decorative or color lenses but the process by which they are illegally distributed and improperly used. However, any lens the FDA disapproves should be considered dangerous to eye health. Decorative circle lenses, for instance, are **not** regulated and are considered hazardous since they cover more of the eye’s surface than regular lenses. Circle lenses prevent the cornea from receiving oxygen, essential to eye health. Circle lenses also make the eye more susceptible to abrasions and infections.

### **Proper care and handling of color lenses**

Caring for [color lenses](#) is essential to eye health. Improper handling could have dangerous results. Color contacts require the same attention to proper cleaning as regular contacts. Clean contacts will guard against dangerous infections. Following the manufacturer’s directions for cleaning your contacts will minimize the risk. Adherence to the following will help.

- Do not wear contacts beyond the time your eye health professional recommends.
- Wash hands before handling contacts- dry hands thoroughly with a lint-free cloth.

- Only use the [contact solution](#) designed for your contacts-never use water.
- Never reuse contact solution.
- Avoid wearing contacts while swimming or in hot tubs.
- Saline should not be used to disinfect lenses. Use only the solution designed for your color contacts.
- Keep your contact lens case clean by rinsing with solution and airing dry.
- Lens cases should be replaced every three months. Replace broken cases to avoid contamination.
- Keep the lens solution in its original container. Transferring solution risks contamination. Additionally, keep the bottle as sterile as possible. Do not allow the tip of the bottle to touch surfaces. Never use old solutions, and do not add to the solution that is already in the case.
- Clean lenses by rubbing them between your fingers, then rinsing with contact solution.

The most important thing to remember before wearing [colored contact lenses](#) for the first time is; to purchase them from a reputable vendor that requires a prescription. Ignoring proper practices outlined by the Federal Drug Administration could take the fun out of wearing color lenses. ministration, could take the fun out of wearing color lenses.