

SUMMER EYE SAFETY

DON'T ADD WATER: WHY CONTACTS AND GLASSES CAN BE A BUMMER IN THE SUMMER

DALLAS, July 12, 2012 -- Contact lenses are a very popular vision correction option. However, the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) strongly advises against using them while swimming in pools, lakes, rivers, hot tubs, or oceans to avoid the risk of contamination or severe vision threatening infection. Those who wish to enjoy fun in the sun or have occupations around water with great vision and with less risk should talk to their refractive surgeon about the benefits of LASIK.

“Many of my patients are shocked to learn about the very real hazards related to wearing contact lenses while enjoying typical summer activities,” said Dr. Eric D. Donnenfeld, M.D., F.A.C.S. and member of the American Refractive Surgery Council. “People turn to contact lenses to rid themselves of the inconvenience of glasses for outdoor fun, so it is natural to be disappointed in their [limitations](#). The downside of contact lenses is one of the many reasons vision correction procedures like LASIK are so popular.”

The chief concern about wearing contact lenses in or around the water stems from the risk of contamination from bacteria and other microorganisms. These are present in all types of water including chlorinated pool water and tap water and pose a significant threat to vision. A few facts about the risk of contact lens use in water:

- A study by Indiana University showed that 100% of soft contact lenses used in pool swimming were contaminated when cultured.
- According to a study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology (October, 2006), contact lens wearers have a one in 2,000 chance of contracting a sight-threatening eye infection.
- Lenses can absorb water as they adjust to the surrounding water content, which causes the lens to stick to the cornea.
- It can take up to 30 minutes after swimming for lenses and the tear film to return to normal and removal of the lenses before they equilibrate can damage the cornea, creating a passage for bacteria and potential infection.

Eyeglasses may not be a useful alternative to contacts. While sunglasses are a hallmark of the summer season, for those who wear prescription lenses, seeing clearly in the water simply may not be possible presenting an enormous inconvenience and safety issue.

“Most people recognize that glasses aren’t really an option in the water. Even if you can put up with water spots on your lenses, the risk of losing your glasses as well as hurting yourself is significant,” said Dr. Donnenfeld. “ Even high-performance goggles with prescription lenses don’t stand up well to surfing, waterskiing and kayaking.”

Not surprisingly, summertime’s tradition of spending time in the water brings with it an increase in interest in the LASIK procedure. For those weighing their vision correction options, the American Refractive Surgery Council offers a few insights:

- Laser Assisted In-Situ Keratomileusis (LASIK) uses laser technology to reshape the cornea to reduce or eliminate the visual irregularities that cause nearsightedness, farsightedness and/or astigmatism.
- LASIK is a safe and effective vision correction option. Compared to contact lenses, LASIK has a significantly higher safety profile. Clinical data reports that the risk of vision loss is much higher with contact lenses than LASIK.
- While today's LASIK technology means more people than ever can take advantage of its vision correcting abilities, not everyone is a candidate. Approximately 20 percent of patients are not candidates for the procedure.
- Because it is an elective procedure, LASIK is a personal choice; one that should be thoroughly considered. Becoming an informed patient, carefully researching and selecting a highly qualified surgeon and understanding what LASIK can and cannot do are essential elements of a successful outcome.

"If you love the water, being limited by contact lenses and glasses does not have to put a damper on the fun," said Dr. Donnenfeld. "Talk with your ophthalmologist about your options and find out if you are one of the millions who can benefit from vision correction with LASIK."

For more information, or to schedule an interview or bylined article, contact Liana Miller of Engaged Communication at 949-276-8920 or liana@engagedcommunication.net

About Dr. Eric D. Donnenfeld, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Dr. Donnenfeld, a member of the American Refractive Surgery Council, is recognized as one of the leading refractive surgeons in the United States. As one of the original investigators of the excimer laser, he has performed more than 50,000 laser vision corrective surgical procedures. Dr. Donnenfeld has served as president of many professional societies including the Nassau Surgical Society, cornea section of ASCRS, the Ophthalmology Division of the Nassau Academy of Medicine, and the International Ocular Microbiology and Immunology Group. He is on the executive board of ASCRS and is the chief editor of *Cataract and Refractive Surgery Today*. He has written over 170 papers on cornea, external disease, cataract and refractive surgery, and 20 book chapters and books. He is on the editorial board of nine journals and has participated in over 40 FDA studies. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and has received its Honor Award, Senior Honor Award and Secretariat Award.