

Contact lens department

This leaflet explains about the contact lens department. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Who is eligible to get contact lenses?

Contact lenses are provided at St Thomas' Hospital only when there is a medical need. Usually this is when vision cannot be improved with glasses but can be improved with contact lenses. We must receive a referral from your ophthalmologist at St Thomas'.

We can prescribe and fit contact lenses for a range of medical eye conditions, such as keratoconus, corneal distortion, or scarred/white corneas. We also treat patients with very high prescriptions (e.g. over +10D or -15D), or to relieve pain or for cosmetic reasons if your eye has scar damage (eg from infection or trauma). We cannot fit contact lenses if normal vision can be obtained with glasses. You will need to go to your own optician for this.

Am I eligible?

Your referral from the ophthalmologist will be reviewed by the optometrists (clinical professionals who specialise in the care of eyes) to ensure there is a clinical need for contact lenses. They will assess your eligibility, which includes some disorders of the cornea, high prescriptions (over +10.00DS/-15.00DS) and bandage (therapeutic) lenses. If you are eligible, an appointment will be sent to you.

What happens at the clinic?

The lens type will be selected according to your clinical need. The lenses are often specially made, so you will usually need a separate appointment to collect your lenses and instructions on how to look after them.

Paying for your contact lenses

Statutory NHS patient charges or exemptions arrangements apply and these charges are updated annually on 1 April each year. The current prices are available from the contact lens clinic. Ordering time depends on the complexity of the lens and the individual manufacturer, but typically 2-8 weeks. The same charges apply for replacement lenses or if a lens breaks outside the three-month manufacturer's warranty period (this does not affect your statutory rights).

Please note that lenses will not be ordered until payment or proof of exemption has been seen. Exemptions include.

- Patients who have proof of a qualifying benefit (eg universal credit)
- Children under 16, or 16 to 19 years and in full-time education.

Patients who are not eligible for exemption can apply to the NHS Business Services Authority for a contribution to the cost of their lenses using an HC1 form, which can be obtained directly from the authority (0300 3301 343) or online by using this link.

<https://apps.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/LISWebAppStaticData/orderLISForm.do>

Important

Someone who is exempt from standard charges, but repeatedly breaks or loses lenses will be charged for replacements. To avoid the problems of contact lens loss, we advise that you keep a spare but only if you have been advised by a contact lens clinician that your prescription is stable. Please note that there is no exemption from payment for spares.

How do I contact the contact lens orders department?

Please use one of the following methods to contact the contact lens orders department:

- Phone: 020 7188 2960 to leave a message on the answer machine. Messages are listened to regularly so please clearly leave your name, your contact number and your enquiry. We aim to call you back within three working days.
- Write to us at: The Contact Lens Clinic, Eye Department, Ground Floor, South Wing, St Thomas' Hospital, Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH
- For pre-arranged collections and booked appointments: The Contact Lens & Low Vision Room, opposite the Ridley Clinic, Adult Eye Clinic Number 1, Ground Floor, South Wing, St Thomas' Hospital from 9am to 12.30pm and 1.30 to 4pm. The clinic is closed for lunch between 12.30 and 1.30pm.

Patients are able to purchase additional solutions from their pharmacy, supermarket, online etc. Lenses can be posted if patients have paid already. Your GP can prescribe eye medication, but cannot prescribe contact lens solutions.

Attending appointments

Please wear your lenses to your appointments if you can tolerate them, as we would like to assess the effect of the lenses on your eyes.

Please let us know in advance if you cannot keep an appointment so that an alternative date can be arranged. Appointments can be booked or rescheduled by calling the Appointments Centre on 020 7188 8871 or email; eyeappointments@gstt.nhs.uk

Patients will be discharged if they fail to attend their appointments and haven't contacted us, or if they have not been seen by the contact lens optician at St Thomas' Hospital for more than 12 months because they haven't booked an appointment.

- If you are not a current patient, you will not be able to obtain contact lenses or contact lens solutions from the hospital, nor can you be seen in the clinic unless you are re-referred by your doctor.
- If you are discharged from the hospital and continue to wear contact lenses, it is essential that you are under the care of a contact lens practitioner. You can book appointments at most opticians however, they may want to do a glasses and eye health check first.

We can supply a copy of your contact lens prescription once your fitting is complete. This is usually after you have been reviewed in the clinic and have been wearing the lenses for a minimum of three months after issue.

Important

Please note that you will not be seen in the contact lens clinic without an appointment.

What to do in an emergency

In an emergency, for example if your eye suddenly becomes red, painful or your vision suddenly becomes worse go to:

- St Thomas' Eye Emergency Department, South Wing, Ground floor, 9am-4pm Monday to Friday.
- 24 hour Eye Emergency Department, Moorfields Eye Hospital at Old Street tube (follow green line on pavement).
- 24 hour Eye Emergency Department, Western Eye Hospital near Marylebone Tube and overground train.
- Your own doctor/GP.

It is important to let the staff know if you are wearing an extended wear lens (eg regular overnight wear for medical reasons) or a bandage (therapeutic) contact lens. Please note that Emergency Departments (A&E) do not provide contact lenses, cases or contact lens solutions.

Contact us

Eye contact lens order department: **t:** 020 7188 2960 9am-5pm Monday to Friday
Appointments Centre: **t:** 020 7188 8871 or **e:** eyeappointments@gstt.nhs.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** www.nhs.uk

Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 4654/VER1

Date published: October 2018

Review date: October 2021

© 2018 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
A list of sources is available on request