



## Vision Alert

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### June/July 2006

#### Eye Infections Emphasize the Importance of Contact Lens Care

Recently there have been increasing reports of a specific and very serious eye infection of the cornea caused by a fungus called *Fusarium*. Although a link was made between the infections and a specific contact lens solution, contact lens care and hygiene play a very important role in reducing the risks of eye infections in contact lens wear. What makes these reports of *Fusarium* infections so concerning is that the vast majority of cases were found in soft contact lens wearers. This was formerly a rare event (20 to 30 cases per year), and in fact still now is very rare (about 200 cases over the past year in the US where there are over 32 million contact lens wearers). A link was discovered quite quickly with the use of a specific contact lens disinfection system (Bausch & Lomb Renu Moisture Lock formula). Over 95% of cases of contact lens associated *Fusarium* infections utilized this product and as a result a recall has been made and the product is no longer being distributed. All patients using this product should immediately discontinue its use. Further investigation showed that the products were not contaminated, but if exposure to the fungus did occur, this product could not disinfect against it. Issues like Hurricane Katrina and last year's tsunami in Asia were thought to significantly increase exposure to *Fusarium* due to sanitary problems that resulted secondary to these events.

Eyecare experts agree that this very disturbing problem accentuates the importance of proper care of contact lenses to insure eye health with lens wear. As such, we at NSVC are emphasizing the following recommendations:

- Clean and disinfect your contact lenses specifically as instructed by your doctor and staff.
- Utilize only the products prescribed by your doctor and DO NOT substitute any products unless first approved by our office. Contact lens solutions are absolutely NOT all the same. Some products are incompatible with certain lens materials, and may result in eye irritation or changes in lens parameters.
- NEVER use tap water on any soft lenses or hybrid soft/rigid lenses.
- NEVER insert rigid gas permeable lenses directly on the eye after rinsing with tap water. Always store your rigid gas permeable lenses in prescribed disinfection for the prescribed time period prior to insertion.
- Replace your contact lenses at the prescribed frequency as instructed by your doctor. Overwear of lenses results in increased lens deposits, reduced oxygen transmission, and increased risk for eye infection.
- Only use lenses for overnight wear if they are prescribed in that manner by your doctor. Today we have specific contact lens materials that allow for much safer overnight wear, but not all lenses are made from these materials. Inappropriate overnight wear of lenses can result in very serious eye infections and inflammations.
- Take appropriate caution when using contact lenses in aquatic environments
- Use good common sense in utilizing contact lenses in a safe way. They are truly medical devices that if prescribed and cared for properly will provide clear and healthy vision for a lifetime.