



Contact Lenses

By Dr. Bart McRoberts

Vision care, like other specialties, has seen many changes over the last few years, and especially in the area of correction of refractive or focusing errors. The most prominent of these changes has been in the area of refractive surgery; at first laser PRK and now Lasik, the new intrastromal corneal rings (Intacs) and in the future, Implanted Contact Lenses (ICL) for large prescriptions.

Paralleling these surgical technical advances have been technical advances in contact lenses. Soft contact lenses were introduced in the early 1970's, and for many years were largely unchanged. Over the last few years, advances in molding techniques and plastics chemistry, however, have created significant improvements and new types of contact lenses; advances which continue at an even faster pace today.

From the original molded "disposable" contact lenses of ten years ago, lens design has much improved, which in turn improves lens handling and comfort. Disposable lenses are now available which are worn once and then thrown away, the ultimate in convenience, and perfect for the part time wearer. Molded disposable "toric" contact lenses for astigmatism are now available which are much thinner and more comfortable than even a few years ago. As well as the standard "monovision" system, molded disposable bifocal contact lenses are available for those who have difficulty with both distance and near vision. The range of powers correctable with contact lenses has also increased.

Recent breakthroughs in plastics chemistry have created contact lenses with very high levels of oxygen transmission. These lenses will enable patients to wear the same pair of lenses for up to 30 days without removing them.

Along with these advances in contact lenses, there have been parallel advances in solution systems. There are systems which sterilize both lenses and cases better, while improving wearing comfort and maintaining extreme ease of use.

It is true that there have been complications with contact lens wear for some patients. Unfortunately, in many instances, contact lenses have come to be treated as a commodity rather than a health care device. No matter what type of lens you



wear, or would like to wear, the single most important aspect of safe, comfortable contact lens wear is continued, regular professional care.

Patients requiring vision correction now have more options than ever to correct their sight. Contact lenses continue to be a popular alternative due to their increasing ease of use, greater biocompatibility and flexibility. To determine what type of vision correction would be best for you, discuss your options with your eye doctor.