

GOC/COVID/03

Date of statement: 23 March 2020 (updated 1 May 2020 and 28 May 2021)

## **General Optical Council (GOC) statement on contact lens aftercare during COVID-19 emergency**

1. This statement will apply in the **red, amber** and **green** phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, as defined by [The College of Optometrists' red-amber-green classification system](#).
2. Registrants should use their professional judgement to decide whether their actions are appropriate in individual circumstances. We expect registrants to balance the risks of providing contact lens aftercare remotely, against seeing a patient in person, and be able to justify their actions.
3. We hope to reassure our registrants that when they act in good conscience, for the public benefit, exercising professional judgement in all of the circumstances that apply, we will support them.
4. In addition, we have signed a [joint regulatory statement](#) which acknowledges that registrants will need to act differently and deliver care in different ways during the COVID-19 emergency in line with Government and public health guidance. We will take account of this in fulfilling our regulatory functions.

### **Purpose of statement**

5. The purpose of this statement is to set out the legal position regarding contact lens aftercare and the factors that we expect registrants to take into account when deciding how to deliver it during the COVID-19 emergency.
6. This statement does not include assessing the fit of contact lenses, sometimes referred to as a contact lens fitting, check or check-up<sup>1</sup>, which is covered by GOC/COVID/02: GOC statement on supply of spectacles and contact lenses during COVID-19 emergency.

### **Legislative requirements**

7. Under section 27(3B) of the Opticians Act 1989, the seller of an optical appliance (or zero powered contact lens) must make arrangements for the patient to receive such aftercare as may be reasonable. Aftercare is not defined in the legislation, but The College of Optometrists and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) have produced guidance on aftercare (see reference to 'relevant clinical advice' in the next paragraph).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://guidance.college-optometrists.org/guidance-contents/knowledge-skills-and-performance-domain/contact-lens-check-ups/#open:253>

## Exercising professional judgement

8. Neither the GOC nor legislation limits the way in which aftercare might be provided. A registrant must exercise professional judgement as to what level of aftercare to provide and how to provide it, which could include remote means such as telephone or video-conference. Optometrists, dispensing opticians, student registrants and business registrants should take account of:
- joint regulatory guidance on remote consultation and prescribing<sup>2</sup>;
  - patient vulnerability and public health advice at the time in question (some individuals may be self-isolating/shielding and unable to attend, public transport may not be readily available, and some domiciliary visits may no longer be possible for instance);
  - relevant clinical advice including from optical professional bodies such as The College of Optometrists<sup>3 4 5</sup> and ABDO<sup>6</sup>;
  - how long it has been since the last contact lens check;
  - the nature of any specific clinical risks;
  - how quickly the business could see the patient following the emergency period in order to minimise any risk;
  - the patient's ability to access remote care; and
  - the suitability of any technology used for remote consultation is sufficient to be able to clearly see and hear the patient (e.g. sufficient connection and screen resolution).

## Recording your decisions

9. Registrants should make a note of their aftercare plan, including the reasons for their decisions. The note should be made directly in the patient records, or where this is not possible, the patient records should be updated at the earliest available opportunity.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://standards.optical.org/supporting-guidance/remote-consultations-and-prescribing/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://guidance.college-optometrists.org/guidance-contents/knowledge-skills-and-performance-domain/contact-lens-supply/aftercare/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/remote-consultations-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.college-optometrists.org/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-information/covid-19-college-guidance/primary-eye-care-covid-19-pandemic-guidance.html#ContactLenses> (see paragraphs 4.4-4.5 and 4.18-4.21 in particular)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.abdo.org.uk/regulation-and-policy/advice-and-guidelines/clinical/contact-lenses/>