

EYE CARE'S VITAL ROLE IN POST-PANDEMIC SOCIETY

*Data, Insights and Actions to Enhance
Clinical and Business Success*



SEE TOMORROW

An Initiative of the Contact Lens Institute

COVID-19 has changed the way **live** **We think** **spend** and the way we **See** the world



COVID-19 has altered the world in more ways than we could have ever imagined. Our patients are not the same people they were pre-pandemic—their daily routines have been disrupted, their living quarters have been converted to accommodate work, school, and entertainment, and their health, their finances, and the economy are regularly on their minds. Simply stated—they have changed!

Eye care professionals need a good understanding of how consumers' lives have shifted, as this is crucial to ensure that the most appropriate products and services are being offered to the right people in the most effective way (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

NEW CONSUMER DATA REVEALED

As a part of a new Contact Lens Institute initiative—See Tomorrow—two commissioned surveys of more than 1,000 U.S. adults (YouGov Plc, 2021) have uncovered unique data and fascinating insights revealing how patient psyches have changed over the course of the pandemic.

Conducted for the program in Summer 2021, the research explored these changes. The information will prove to be of substantial value to eye care professionals as you and your peers navigate a changed society.

EYE OPENING RESULTS

The patient sitting in your chair today is not the same person from 18 months ago. In fact,

more than one in two U.S. adults say they have seen a change in their health during the pandemic, with one in six reporting significant changes (either good or bad). With these changes in mind, it is time to re-establish doctor-patient relationships.

Get to know your patients again through attentive conversation. The survey shows nearly half of all people want their health care practitioner to ask them how their lives have changed. Not only do these patients want to talk, they want to hear from health care professionals and their recommendations on how they can improve their health: 73% of U.S. adults want their health care professional to alert them to new information and 70% want to be told about products that can improve their quality of life.

Patients want to hear recommendations from their health care professionals. The Contact Lens Institute research shows that approximately one in three patients trust their health care professionals even more than before the pandemic, especially those patients 18-34 years old and those 55+. Patients are also turning to online sources for information, with 32% of people trusting online sources more than before the pandemic. It would be prudent to connect with your patients, in person and digitally, to have these conversations and better address their needs. Otherwise they may not be receiving the most accurate and relevant information and could look to alternative sources.

EYE CARE'S ELEVATED ROLE

We know that health is on everyone's mind, but how does that apply to eye care? Everyone is all too familiar with these common pandemic related complaints: "I am concerned about my kids' eyesight with the excessive screen time for virtual school" and "I hate when my glasses fog up because of mask wear." About one in four people, and one in two contact lens wearers, are thinking more about their eye health.

There has been an uptick in new contact lens fits through the pandemic (Coats, 2021); however, about 70% of U.S. adults and 62% of prescription glasses wearers say that they have not or don't know if they have had a conversation with their eye doctor about contact lens wear. More than one in two people requiring vision correction say they don't know much about contact lenses.

These results indicate that eye care professionals and their staff have an opportunity to talk to patients about the option of wearing contact lenses and about the latest advances made to these products. In fact, 77% of contact lens wearers and 30% of prescription glasses wearers want to hear about new contact lens options that are right for them. Having the option of contact lenses can change habits and improve the quality of life for many patients.

Coming out of the pandemic, people have a positive outlook on the future. The survey results show that 89% of people say eyesight and eye health are very or somewhat important to pursuing a promising future—ranked highest among all health aspects queried (tied with mobility).

People's spending habits are also changing. Consumer research has found that consumers now focus most on basic needs, such as hygiene, cleaning, and staple products, and less so on non-essential categories; there is also an ever increasing desire to support local businesses and consider more sustainable products (Accenture, 2020).

But what does this mean for your practice?

One in three of all U.S. adults and nearly 50% of contact lens wearers plan to spend more money on things that improve their future than they did pre-pandemic. These trends are especially noticeable in the 18-34 age group, which is the typical age range for contact lens wearers. In this same group, 42% and 45% will spend more on things that improve their future and improve their health, respectively.

In the minds of U.S. consumers, good eyesight is vital to future happiness—and they're ready to invest in themselves.



Among 18-34 year olds

42% want to spend more money on things that improve their future



45% want to spend more money on things that improve their health



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EYE CARE COMMUNITY

1 Reconnect with your patients.

Get to know what has changed in your patients' lives and don't be afraid to offer your recommendations. These patients trust you and want to hear from you about new information and products.

Who can benefit from your recommendations? Consider the local florist and business owner who has switched to fulfilling online flower orders during the pandemic lockdown. The typical routine of using single vision distance contact lenses and putting reading glasses overtop to achieve clear near vision is suddenly insufficient. The need for clarity in the intermediate space to use a computer has never been so apparent. A simple discussion about advances in multifocal contact lens development and a recommendation for a multifocal fitting can help the person achieve functional vision for all distances while working. By getting to know the changes that a patient has experienced, you can make a recommendation that can improve productivity and overall quality of life.

 **77%**

of contact lens wearers want to hear about new contact lens options

 **30%**

of prescription glasses wearers want to hear about new types of contact lenses that may be right for them

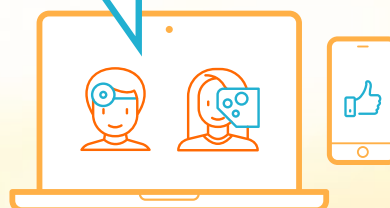
2 Recommend products to suit changing lifestyles.

As more employers consider flex schedules and hybrid work-from-home models (McGregor, 2021), people will experience a shift in their lifestyles, where the pre-pandemic commuting time is better utilized by doing other things, like sports, hobbies, and going out to support local shops. With this resurgence in social life, this is an opportunity for you to make recommendations for dual use of glasses and contact lenses to suit their changing lifestyles. Remember that patients want to spend more money on things that improve their health and their future—have confidence in recommending appropriate premium contact lens products without fear that they will be rejected because of price. Eye care professionals should prescribe the healthiest and the best options that suit their patients' needs.

NEARLY
1/2

of all people want their health professional to ask how their life has changed.

Make sure you are engaging patients in person **AND** digitally to convert trust into action.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EYE CARE COMMUNITY CONTINUED

3 Establish an online portal to connect with those patients that prefer to communicate virtually.

People have turned in greater numbers to virtual communication channels to stay connected during the pandemic and have embraced digital commerce (Accenture, 2020). It would be prudent to permanently establish virtual communication methods to stay connected with your patients, making technologies and processes adopted over the past year part of your regular offering. For example, if you haven't already, consider implementing an online contact lens request form, where patients could choose to replenish their contact lens supply without making a physical trip to your office. Patients can order online and get the contact lenses shipped directly to their homes. This increases patient retention for your office, improves the patient experience, and allows them to shop and support the businesses they know and trust—including your practice.

4 Educate about the value of products.

While some people may be ready to spend on what improves their health, some may be anxious about their financial stability. It is important to educate patients about the value of products that best suit their needs.

Consider the typical habitual contact lens wearer who used to wear contact lenses every day and chose to wear monthly lenses to keep costs low. Wear time has decreased for many of these patients while staying at home (Coats, 2021), and what was once a cost-effective option could now be considered wasteful if lenses are not worn frequently through the month. A recommendation of temporarily switching to a 1-day lens may help address concerns surrounding waste and suit their "better bang for your buck" mentality—and perhaps help them remain in daily disposables as their wearing frequency returns to normal.

ACT TODAY TO HELP PATIENTS SEE TOMORROW

Patient psyches have changed over the course of the pandemic, and now we better understand how. The results from the See Tomorrow surveys will help you engage more deeply with patients and discover post-pandemic clinical and business success as the world reopens.

The Contact Lens Institute will continue to examine what has changed in patients' lives over the past 18 months, how they are looking ahead to an even more dynamic future, and why good vision—including contact lens wear—plays a central role in a bright future. By acting today, the entire eye care community can help patients See Tomorrow!

1/4

of the population are thinking more about their eye health compared to before the pandemic

BUT 63%

of U.S. adults requiring vision correction say their eye doctor has **not** discussed contact lenses or they are not sure

MORE THAN HALF

of people requiring vision correction say they do not know much about contact lenses

Learn more about
what's on the horizon at
SeeTomorrowNow.com



References:

1. Kotler P, Keller KL. (2012). *Marketing management*. Pearson France.
2. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from studies conducted by YouGov Plc. Study 1: 1,298 US adults interviewed online between June 29-30, 2021. Study 2: 1,196 US adults interviewed online between July 2-7, 2021. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).
3. Coats J. Contact lens trends during COVID-19. *Optometry Times*. Jan digital edition 2021; 13:1.
4. McGregor J. The hybrid office is here to stay. The shift could be more disruptive than the move to all-remote work. *The Washington Post*. March 30, 2021.
5. Accenture. Report: COVID-19: How consumer behavior will be changed. April 2020.

The Contact Lens Institute advances the latest innovations in safe and effective contact lens and lens care products and services that provide unique benefits to patients while satisfying the evolving needs of eye care professionals. CLI undertakes activities that properly assess, enhance, promote, and balance contact lens and lens care industry welfare and growth, including the safe use of products in the marketplace. Its members include Alcon, Bausch + Lomb, CooperVision, and Johnson & Johnson Vision.

For more information, **visit contactlensinstitute.org**.