

24.07.23**Communications Department**Royal United Hospital
Combe Park
Bath
BA1 3NGTel: 01225 826230 / 821459
Mobile: 07557 756658 (office hours)ruh-tr.communicationteam@nhs.net
www.ruh.nhs.uk
www.twitter.com/RUHBath

Media Release

RUH consultants warn of dangers of swimming while wearing contact lenses

Eye specialists from the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust are warning of the dangers of swimming or showering while wearing contact lenses, which can lead to sight-threatening infections.

Following a reduction in the number of cases of cornea infections seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, consultants at the RUH are now seeing a rise in cases, back to pre-pandemic levels.

Cornea infections, or microbial keratitis, can occur when the cornea, which is the clear window at the front of the eye, becomes infected, and can be caused by bacteria, fungi or parasites. These cornea infections are much more common in people who wear contact lenses, particularly those who use extended-wear lenses.

People who swim or shower while wearing contact lenses run the biggest risk of contracting an infection, which in extreme cases can lead to a loss of sight.

Symptoms of infections can include blurry vision, eye pain, red eyes, watering from the eye, increased light sensitivity and the feeling that there is something in the eye.

Shokufeh Tavassoli, Consultant Ophthalmologist and Cornea Surgeon at the RUH, said: "We are seeing a large number of patients with sight-threatening corneal infections because they are not aware that they should remove their contact lenses before swimming or showering,

"Other risk factors can include wearing contact lenses in a spa, steam room or if you're doing water sports.

“With summer here and warm and sunnier weather, there will be more people swimming and spending time outside in water, so it’s really important that those who wear contact lenses are aware of the dangers if they don’t remove them.

“Corneal infections can have very nasty symptoms and in some cases can even lead to a loss of vision.

“So if you wear contact lenses, please do make sure you always remove them before swimming or showering to greatly reduce your risk of contracting an infection.

“Make sure you contact your optician or GP for more advice on how to use contact lenses safely, or if you have any concerns about your eyesight.”

You can also find advice on the British Contact Lens Association website: https://www.bcla.org.uk/Public/Public/Consumer/Important_dos_and_dont_s_of_contact_lens_wear.aspx

Ends

Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we're proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.

We're currently building a new Cancer Centre at the RUH. The Dyson Cancer Centre, which is set to open in autumn 2023, will help transform the care we provide for patients, families and carers.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk