



**FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE**

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## **CONSUMER ALERT**

### **Georgia's Eye Doctors Say Hurricane Season's Flood Waters May Cause Vision Risk *Optometrists Offer Flood-Related Eye Care Precautions***

**Atlanta, Ga. (September 2024)** – As yet another hurricane travels towards Georgia, the state's doctors of optometry are urging the public to protect their vision and follow flood-related eye care precautions.

"In addition to putting lives at risk, flood waters can contain a whole host of unexpected microorganisms that put vision at risk", said Dr. Nadine Humen Forche, president of the Georgia Optometric Association. "Flooding can cause an increase in the incidence of water-borne pathogens -- including amoeba, parasites, bacteria and viruses – that can be very dangerous to the eye and may lead to infections, other complications and even loss of sight."

When flooding occurs, the members of the Georgia Optometric Association (GOA) urge consumers to be vigilant with eye protection and eye care, especially people who wear contact lenses.

The GOA recommends residents in flood areas with possibly compromised water delivery systems pay special attention to public messages about water safety/contamination, especially if using this water to wash hands for contact lens use.

"Even on a normal day, contact lenses can act like a sponge and trap bacteria, which is why doctors of optometry often advise against their patients sleeping with their lenses in," stated Dr. Forche. "In a flood situation, you are exposed to an even greater number of pathogens and the risk of one getting trapped between the contact lens and the eye is much, much greater leading to very severe problems."

"If you think you may need to evacuate, be sure to locate a copy of your vision prescription and carry it with you so you can get replacement eyeglasses or lenses as soon as possible," she added.

Tips for how contact lens wearers can avoid exposure to flood-related eye infections and complications include:

- Avoid contact with flood waters. If contact cannot be avoided, remove contact lenses prior to exposure to water. If contact lenses have to stay in, wear goggles.
- Don't assume treated tap water is safe. Avoid using tap water to wash or store contact lenses or contact lens cases.
- Always wash and dry hands before touching the eye or handling contact lenses. Use hand disinfectant frequently.
- Use only sterile products recommended by your optometrist to clean and disinfect lenses. Saline solution and rewetting drops are not designed to disinfect lenses.

- Only fresh solution should be used to clean and store contact lenses. Never re-use old solution. Contact lens solution must be changed according to the manufacturer's recommendations, even if the lenses are not used daily.
- Rub and rinse the surface of the contact lens before storing using a Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved contact lens disinfecting solution.
- Contact lens wearers who regularly sleep in contact lenses as prescribed should refrain from doing so if exposed to water.
- Never put contact lenses in the mouth or moisten them with saliva, which is full of bacteria and a potential source of infection.
- Never use contacts that have not been prescribed by an eye doctor.
- Never wear lenses prescribed for another person.

### **Symptoms to Watch For**

If you experience any of the following conditions, contact your optometrist immediately:

- Red and irritated eyes lasting for an unusually long period of time after lens removal.
- Pain in and around the eyes especially if it progressively worsens.
- Increased sensitivity to light.
- Sudden blurred or fuzzy vision.
- Excessive eye tearing or discharge.

Although these risks are considered rare or unlikely because the eye has a great ability to combat infection through tears and immune response, the risk of infection is still a distinct possibility that warrants public awareness.

To find an optometrist in your area or for additional information, please visit [www.GOAeyes.com](http://www.GOAeyes.com).

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*The Georgia Optometric Association is a statewide professional organization representing over 700 doctors of optometry serving communities throughout the state of Georgia. Founded in 1904, the GOA and its members work to provide the public with quality vision and eye care services. For more information visit [www.GOAeyes.com](http://www.GOAeyes.com), [www.facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation) or follow us on Twitter @GOA\_eyes.*