

Give your staff tools they need for contact lens dispensing

Provide front desk with telephone script, brochure, patient instruction sheet, order form.

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By [Kathy McNelis](#)



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Contact lens dispensing is an important addition to any dispensary. In fact, in today's general ophthalmology practice, dispensing all eyewear, including contact lenses, is practically a necessity. With excellent planning and efficient office procedures, the contact lens dispensing can be a profitable venture that enhances patient experiences, reminding them of the excellent medical care they are given at the office.

Starting with the support of the ophthalmologist, the business of contact lenses involves everyone in the office, including the office manager, the ophthalmic technician, the receptionist, the bookkeeper, the optometrist, and the optician. Another part of the team consists of the vendors, the soft lens manufacturers, the gas-permeable lens laboratory, the contact lens distributor, and the solution manufacturers. Dispensaries depend on them to provide quality products and educational material for staff and patients.

Some procedures are critical to the success of contact lens practice in a busy ophthalmology office.



Table 1:
Contact
Lens

Telephone script: The script in Table 1 ensures that patients' contact lens inquiries will be handled in a consistent manner. It will prevent appointment scheduling problems for contact lens patients and provide them with information about charges for visits and contact lens ordering.

Having a script eliminates the discomfort that some front desk staff have about dealing with contact lens information and gives guidelines for how and when to turn the call over.

Brochure: The purpose of the brochure is to communicate the contact lens fitting philosophy and office procedures to patients. It can include a price list and policies regarding returns and refunds. The law now requires that each contact lens patient be given a complete contact lens prescription. The brochure can be the vehicle in which one delivers the prescription and may help to solidify the relationship by emphasizing the benefits of getting lenses at the ophthalmologist's office.

Instruction sheet: This is given to new patients at the time of dispensing and includes directions for lens care, handling, and follow-up visits. It can include a signature area for the patient and instructor to use as documentation for the patient's record.

Order form: The order form ensures that orders are handled efficiently. If the person who orders the lenses is not available, anyone in the office should be able to tell when the lens was ordered and when it will be received. It can also serve as documentation for the patient's chart.

Customized contact lens prescription: Practices are required by law to give the contact lens patients a prescription for their lenses. Practitioners can use this as an opportunity to improve communication with patients. Including a personal message from the contact lens fitter and the costs of replacements through the office may be all the patient needs to stay with the dispensary instead of shopping around.

Kathy McNelis, COA, NCLC, ABOC, is secretary of the American Association of Dispensing Ophthalmologists Inc. and is an optician and contact lens technician with more than 30 years in the optical industry. She is president of Dynamic Ophthalmic Training and fits contact lenses at Scheie Eye Institute, Philadelphia, and at Kids Eyes, the office of Martin Wilson, MD, Paoli, PA.