



Harris County Hospital District

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MEDIA RELEASE

Use Precaution When Swimming with Contact Lenses

HOUSTON (May 30, 2007) – It’s hot outside and you’re ready for a swim, but contact lens wearers should beware; wearing contacts in the pool could lead to eye infections, say physicians at the Harris County Hospital District.

“Soft contacts can be a reservoir of toxicity,” said Dr. Reza Farahani, optometrist at Acres Home Health Center and instructor of ophthalmology at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. “Since they contain a lot of water, they can act as a sponge for microorganisms and chemicals. In some cases – if the pool water is dirty – it can lead to corneal infections and/or ulcers.”

A corneal ulcer is an open sore on the cornea. Symptoms include red eyes, severe pain, blurry vision and feeling that something is in the eye. If you suffer from these symptoms, Farahani suggests visiting your eye doctor.

To prevent infections, Farahani recommends taking contacts out before swimming and using tightly sealed prescription goggles or wearing disposable contacts that can be thrown away immediately after swimming.

But if a person insists on swimming with non-disposable contacts, Farahani recommends cleaning and disinfecting the lenses immediately after swimming.

“Proper contact lens hygiene is the key to keeping eyes safe,” Farahani said.

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation’s third most-populous county. It provides more than 1.1 million health care visits each year to uninsured and underinsured residents of Harris County. The hospital district operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, eight school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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