

Looking Great with Great Eyewear

Women's Edition Magazine

Good Looks – January 1998

By Diana L. Criser

Have you been looking for a new option in eyewear, but are unsure where to start? Let's take a look at the latest and greatest offerings available from your local eye care professional.

Frames The newest colors in eyeglass frames are matte finishes and metals such as bronze, pewter and brushed gold. Hand-painted frames in muted colors are also in high demand due to the uniqueness of each frame.

Styles in eyeglass frames have become smaller; the current trend leans toward the retro "Benjamin Franklin"-size frames in angular shapes. Ovals and octagonal shapes are leading the market in sales. Rimless frames are also a common choice for new eyeglass wearers. A strong, clear plastic strip similar to fishing line holds the lens in place on the bottom, reducing the look and feel of standard frames.

Sales of plastic frames have been reduced due to higher sales of stainless steel and titanium frames. This rise in popularity is mostly due to the lightness and durability of these metals. Titanium frames are also hypo-allergenic and may be worn by people with an allergy to other metals. Spring hinges are still fairly common in frames, but the added weight of the springs tends to cancel out the lightness of the stainless or titanium frames.

If you tend to be very hard on your glasses, an Auto-Flex frame may be your best bet. The Auto-Flex frame is titanium-based and can be bent, stepped on or twisted, and will return back to its original shape. The cost is a bit higher than other frames, but compared to the cost of replacing broken frames, it is well worth the investment. And if you do happen to break a pair of Auto-Flex frames, the warranty will cover your replacement pair.

Lenses Most lenses today are made of a durable, thin form of plastic, rather than heavy glass, to compliment lightweight frames. Lenses can also be reduced in thickness to reduce weight and thick-sided lenses.

An option for bifocal wearers are progressive lenses, such as Verilux. Once referred to as no-line bifocals, the term "progressive" is more descriptive because each lens contains approximately 10-12 different focuses. Aside from cosmetic benefits, progressive lenses also offer better near, intermediate, distance and peripheral vision than conventional bi- or trifocals.

For children or adults who participate in sports or other high-impact activities, a poly-carbonate lens is now available. This thinner plastic lens is bullet-proof and

shatter-proof, with ultra-violet (UV) protection built in.

There are many types of coatings which can be added to lenses, including tinting, UV protection, scratch guard, and a new anti-reflective coating. Anti-reflection reduces the glare of camera flashes and spotlights, decreases eye strain from computer and television screens and improves clarity during nighttime driving. An anti-reflective coating can be added to your lenses for around \$50.

Contact Lenses *Hard contacts:* Standard hard lenses are becoming obsolete, due to the lens polymers' inability to allow oxygen permeation to the cornea. This makes lenses uncomfortable to the wearer, and usually a more comfortable alternative is chosen. An option to standard hard contacts are rigid gas permeable (RGP) lenses. These contacts are made of a hard polymer which does allow oxygen to reach the cornea, and are consequently healthier for the cornea than standard hard contacts. Gas permeable lenses also provide clearer vision and are easy to care for, and are available in both daily and extended wear.

Soft contact lenses: Soft lenses are the most popular form of contacts on the market today, although they have some drawbacks. Unlike hard lenses, soft contacts can support bacteria growth and must be disinfected on a regular basis. Soft contacts are also very fragile and wear out quicker than hard lenses. Soft contact lenses can basically be classified by the frequency of replacement and length of wearing time.

Regular soft contact lenses usually require enzymatic cleaning and are usually replaced within two years. *Frequent replacement lenses* are usually worn for two or three months and then thrown away. *Disposable contacts* are replaced daily or weekly, depending on the type purchased.

Extended wear contact lenses usually contain a high water content and have a high oxygen permeability. They can be worn overnight for an extended period of time. *Flexible wear contact lenses* are a thin lens with high oxygen permeability. These lenses are usually worn up to 18 hours a day. *Daily wear contact lenses* are good for sports and part-time wear, and are usually worn between 8-12 hours a day.

Most people begin to need bifocals or reading glasses between the ages of 38-43. To accommodate these individuals, a new soft, disposable contact lens fitting technique, such as Acuvue for Monovision, is available. This technique uses a prescription for close vision in one eye and one for distance vision in the other. The brain makes the adaptation to the different calibrations immediately, so there is no lag time in the performance of these lenses.

About 85% of patients can adapt to monovision; people with poor equilibrium or inner ear trouble may not be able to make the adjustment. Ask your eye care professional for a trial pair of monovision contacts if you are unsure of compatibility.

For a dramatic change to the look of your eyes, with or without a prescription,

colored and special effect contacts are also available. Colored contacts are now offered in disposable form, and provide realistic looking, attractive colors patterned after the natural eye. Special effect contacts are available in many styles and colors, such as smile faces, cat or reptile eyes, and bloodshot-look effects. These contacts are considerably more costly than regular soft contacts, but the unique effect may be well worth the investment.

Whatever type of eyewear you are looking for, chances are your eye care professional can accommodate your needs. Schedule an appointment today to check out the new styles available!