

Statement on verification of contact lens specifications and definition of aftercare

Verification of contact lens specifications

1. Section 27 of the Opticians Act 1989 ('the Act') provides that prescription contact lenses can be sold:
 - by or under the supervision¹ of a dispensing optician, optometrist or registered medical practitioner; or
 - (as long as the user is not under 16 or registered visually impaired) under the general direction of a dispensing optician, optometrist or registered medical practitioner, who need not be on the premises at the time, if the supplier first receives the original specification or verifies a copy of or the particulars of the specification with the prescriber.
2. In order to be supplied with prescription contact lenses, a person must have an in-date contact lens specification which has been issued following a contact lens fitting. Where the sale is being made under the general direction (rather than supervision) of a registrant, and a copy² of the contact lens specification is provided, section 27(3)(ii) of the Act requires the copy of the specification to be verified with the person who provided the original specification.
3. We do not, on the basis of the information currently available, consider that there is sufficient evidence of risk of harm to the public, or a wider public interest, in prosecuting sellers who do not verify a copy of an in-date contact lens specification provided that the copy of the specification is clear, does not contain any obvious errors and has not obviously been tampered with. Therefore, we will not enforce this requirement.
4. Where the person has only provided the particulars³ of a contact lens specification and has not provided either the original or a copy of the original specification, we continue to expect sellers of contact lenses to verify the particulars of a contact lens specification in accordance with section 27(3)(iii) of the Act.

¹ Case law and our [standards of practice](#) requires that the supervisor must be on the premises at the time of the sale, exercising their professional judgement as a clinician and in a position to intervene in the patient's interests.

² A copy can be a physical copy or an electronic copy such as a scan or photograph.

³ A written or electronic order from the patient, which contains the details that are in the contact lens specification, but does not include the original or a copy of the contact lens specification.

5. We continue to expect our registrants to co-operate with all requests for verification.

Definition of aftercare

6. Where the sale of prescription contact lenses is being made under the general direction (rather than supervision) of a registrant, section 27(3B) of the Act provides that the seller must make arrangements for the buyer “to receive aftercare in so far as, and for as long as, may be reasonable in his particular case”.
7. The Act does not set out a definition of aftercare. We expect aftercare to include:
 - instructions and information on the inserting, wearing and removing of the contact lenses;
 - instructions and information on the cleaning and storing of the contact lenses;
 - signs or symptoms the patient should look out for;
 - details of whom the patient should contact if they have problems with the contact lenses; and
 - the importance of having regular contact lens check-ups.
8. The definition of aftercare in this statement is only relevant to section 27(3B) of the Act. It does not include assessing the fit of contact lenses, sometimes referred to as a contact lens fitting, check or check-up by optical businesses. Fitting of contact lenses is covered by section 25 of the Act and the duty at section 25(5)(b) to “provide the individual with instructions and information on the care, wearing, treatment, cleaning and maintenance” of the lenses.