While the first contact lens dates back over 500 years, the modern lenses worn today by nearly 44 million Americans only came into existence in the 1950s. Since that time, contact lenses have seen dramatic improvements over the last seven decades. Manufacturers continue to research and develop innovative technologies aimed at tackling challenging vision conditions and improving the quality of life for the millions of contact lens consumers across the country.

**A History of Contact Lens Innovation**

**HOW MANUFACTURERS HAVE CHANGED THE WAY WE SEE**

Contact lenses are made with plastic for the first time—a dramatic improvement from the original rigid, blown-glass lenses.

Manufacturers redesign lenses to cover only the cornea of the eye—improving comfort and oxygen permeability—and develop the first hydrogel-based lenses, which better drape the eye’s surface.

Lens manufacturers introduce contacts that can be replaced after daily, weekly or monthly wear—increasing patient choice and making lenses safer than ever before.

By 2024, it is estimated that there will be more than 46 million U.S. contact lens wearers. Thanks to the continued innovation of contact lens manufacturers, we can hope to see lenses in the future that better-suit the unique ocular features of lens wearers, and that seek to address currently unmet vision and eye health needs. For example:

1. **Even thinner contact lenses that maximize oxygen transmissibility and wearer comfort,**
2. **Scleral lenses that could correct severe corneal injuries without surgery,**
3. **Zoom capable lenses that would be controlled by the wearer’s blink,**
4. **Smart contact lenses that would monitor the glucose levels of diabetic patients.**

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