

## 'Blinded by a contact lens': Mother has left eye removed after contracting aggressive infection

- **Jacqui Stone, 42, had 22 operations on her eye but doctors couldn't save it**
- **Aggressive fungal infection ate away at three layers and 70 nerves**
- **She noticed her vision going blurry the day after wearing the disposables**
- **She was using the second most popular brand in Britain**
- **The teaching assistant nearly died twice and now uses a prosthetic**

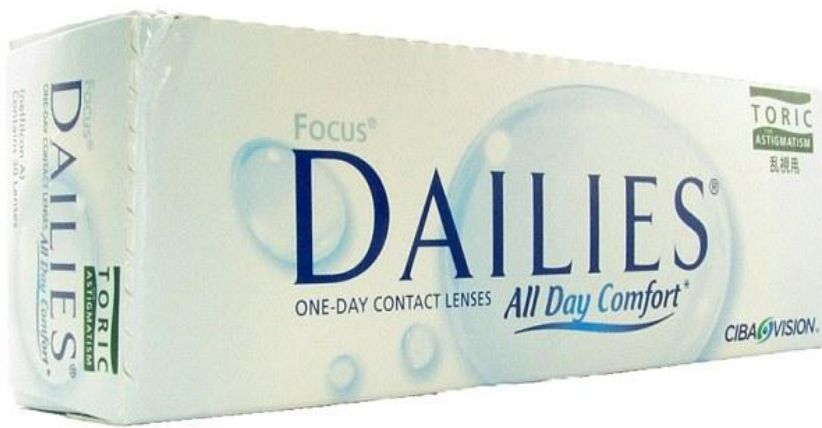
By Keith Gladdis

A mother lost her left eye after suffering a rare infection she believes was caused by her contact lens. Jacqui Stone endured 22 operations and more than 17 weeks in hospital after wearing a disposable lens from a popular brand.

Doctors had to remove her eye because of fears the rare but aggressive fungal infection would penetrate her optic nerve and enter her brain.



Infection: Jacqui Stone, 42 spent 17 weeks in hospital after wearing her contact lenses for one day  
Aggressive: Surgeons feared the rare fungus would penetrate her optic nerve and enter her brain



Shocking: The maths teaching assistant bought the popular brand of lenses online in the UK

Mrs Stone, 42, said: 'They tried everything to save my eye but the fungus had grown too strong. 'It would have killed me. I'm terrified the fungus will come back if I get ill.'

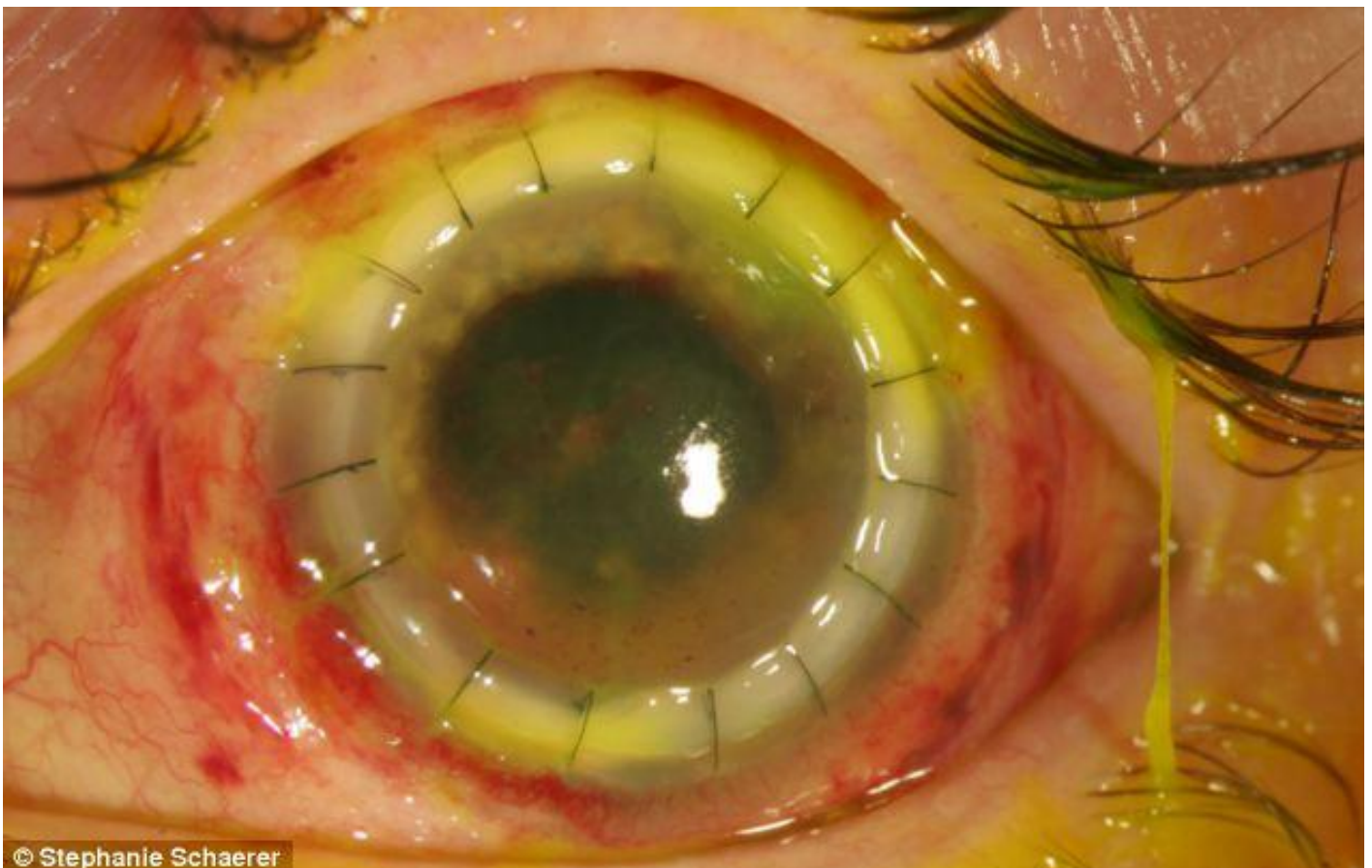
### More...

- Woman who suffered extreme allergic reaction to eyelash extensions is told by salon 'remove them yourself'
- Young woman whose headaches were dismissed as migraines by doctors was diagnosed with a brain tumour and died just hours later

The maths teaching assistant bought the Focus Dailies All-Day Comfort Lenses from a UK website last May to help her see the whiteboard better in the classroom. The mother of two, who has worn contact lenses 'on and off' for 20 years, said everything seemed normal when she put the lenses in.

She added: 'I am one of those people who doesn't take risks – I know I washed my hands when I put them in. It wasn't until I got home at 5pm that I thought "these feel awful" and had to take them out.

'I threw them away as they were disposables and didn't think any more about it at the time. But the next day I had very blurred vision out of my left eye. At the time I thought it was painful but the pain just got worse and worse.'



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Last resort: The teaching assistant had 22 operations to save her eye, but the fungus was deeply rooted



Too late: The mother wears a prosthetic left eye after surgeons were forced to remove the infected eyeball



Agony: Days after wearing the disposable lens, Mrs Stone was taken to hospital in excruciating pain Mrs Stone, of Braintree, Essex, was taken to Broomfield Hospital, Chelmsford, two days later when the pain became unbearable. She was given eye drops and sent home the same day but returned less than 24 hours later after again suffering excruciating pain.

She added: 'I was screaming in pain and my teeth were chattering – it was unbearable. They told me they had given me enough morphine for a broken leg but the drugs didn't touch it. She was referred to Moorfields Eye Hospital in London over the Jubilee weekend but her condition continued to worsen.

By June, Mrs Stone was making almost daily visits to the hospital because of the pain.



Suffering: Mrs Stone was given enough morphine for a broken leg - but the pain was still unbearable



Close to death: The fungus ate away at three layers of her eye and 70 nerves



The fungus still could be lying dormant in her body and there is a chance she could lose sight in her right eye too. On June 21 last year she was referred to Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, where she was diagnosed with an infection caused by the fungus *Fusarium*.

By then it had eaten away at three layers of her eye and at 70 nerves. She underwent 22 procedures to save her eye, including two corneal transplants, at Addenbrooke's – but the fungus was too deep rooted.

### **AGONY FROM FALSE LASHES**

A woman was left in agony after suffering an allergic reaction to eyelash extensions. Jane Rolfe, 42, suffered severely blistered skin and a badly swollen face after having a reaction to the glue used to apply the eyelashes.

But when Mrs Rolfe, a primary school teaching assistant, returned to the salon they were unable to remove the extensions.

Instead the mother of one was forced to spend more than five hours peeling the lashes off herself. She said: 'I have never felt pain like it. For weeks after I couldn't open my eyes properly and my vision seemed blurred. The whole experience was harrowing.'

Although Mrs Rolfe told her beautician she had never had extensions before, she says she was not given an allergy test.

She fears the incident may have triggered a lifelong intolerance to adhesives after she had another reaction to household superglue.

She has filed a claim for compensation against Allianz, the insurance company for Debut beauty salon in Brentwood, Essex – but the insurer is refusing to pay out, saying the salon broke its policy terms by not doing a patch test. The Debut salon owner was unavailable for comment.

Mrs Stone now wears a temporary prosthetic eye and will begin having one specially made next week. She is suing Alcon UK, which manufactures Focus Dailies, as well as preparing a joint case against Broomfield Hospital and Moorfields Hospital for clinical negligence.

She said: 'What makes me angry is I now know that if I had been given the correct drops in the first couple of weeks I would still have my eye.'

'I still can't have steroids as the fungus could be lying dormant in my body and drugs could trigger it. 'There is also a risk of losing sight in my right eye when my left eye completely shuts down as they are connected.' A spokesman for Alcon said: 'Alcon is aware of a claim by a UK consumer that she experienced health-related complications from an eye infection she acquired in spring 2012 resulting in her losing one eye. 'She is alleging that the infection was connected to her use of our contact lens.'

'Alcon was concerned to hear of this and conducted an investigation based on the evidence provided but did not find any connection between the contact lens and the consumer's unfortunate experience.'

'Alcon is committed to promoting safe and effective contact lens wear and ensuring the safety of patients and the efficacy and integrity of all its products.'

A spokesman for Moorfields Eye Hospital said it was reviewing the care that Mrs Stone received. They added: 'No legal claim has yet been commenced.'

Dr Ronan Fenton, medical director at Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust, said it had worked with Mrs Stone to investigate the circumstances around the loss of her eye.

He added: 'Notwithstanding the likelihood of legal proceedings we hope this positive co-operation will continue.'