What’s Wrong With My Eye?
By: Tyra Harper
I have worn glasses since I was 8 years old. I remember going to the eye doctor and begging my mother to let me try out contacts. But her response was always the same “No.” Then finally, when I was able to get contacts I understood why I had to wait, because there is a lot of responsibility that comes with contact lenses. According to Channel 2 Action News, a CDC report states that more than one million contact lens wearers in Georgia are putting themselves at greater risk for infection by a parasite that feeds on eyeballs.

In an interview with Channel 2, Oze McCallum, who had to get his infected eye surgically removed, said, "I'm 57 years old, you know, and I never thought I'd end up at a point where I would have to lose an eye." According to the report, McCallum is the victim of a tiny organism called an acanthameoba. So why do situations like this occur?

A CDC report Contact Lens Wearer Demographics and Risk Behaviors for Contact Lens Related Eye Infections states, “Contact lenses provide safe and effective vision correction for many Americans. However, contact lens wearers risk infection if they fail to wear, clean, disinfect, and store their contact lenses as directed.”

According to the CDC website, “Between 40%-90% of contact lens wearers do not properly follow the care instructions for their contact lenses.” Further, the CDC website states, “Improper cleaning and irregular replacement of contact lenses and contact lens cases—as well as other behaviors relating to contact lens hygiene and care—have been linked to a higher risk of complications.”

Further, the CDC report Contact Lens Wearer Demographics and Risk Behaviors for Contact Lens Related Eye Infections states, “Exposure of lenses to water raises the risk for infection because microorganisms living in water can be transferred to the eye. Even household tap water, although treated to be safe for drinking, is not sterile and contains microorganisms that can contaminate lens cases and contact lenses and cause eye infections.”

Why aren’t we taking better care of ourselves? We only get one set of eyes, so why would anyone put their vision at risk? Anytime that we have to put an object in our eyes, we should make sure we are following the proper precautions. One of the main points emphasized when someone gets contacts is the importance of cleaning their hands and proper cleaning of their contacts. Many times people feel that since they have not taken the proper cleaning steps and nothing happens, that they can continue with these unhealthy habits with no consequence. Even after I got my first set of contacts, I was still very careful about washing my hands and making sure that I cared for my contacts the proper way. I think people should reevaluate if not keeping up with their eye health is worth losing something so important—their vision. What will it take for people to stop jeopardizing their health? Maybe if they end up having to get an eye removed, they just may understand the importance.