White-gray corneal infiltrates are a common complication associated with contact lens wear. Although infectious keratitis is a very serious problem, contact lens-associated sterile corneal infiltrates are a more common finding. Initially, it is difficult to clinically differentiate between the infiltrates associated with a noninfectious and infectious keratitis. The infiltrates appear as single or multiple white to white-gray lesions, and they are located in the subepithelial region of the cornea. They are commonly associated with surrounding edema and inflammation. Conjunctival injection is also a common finding. The patient typically experiences pain and photophobia.

This case scenario is not uncommon. Our young patient wore her lenses overnight and now has a corneal infiltrate, conjunctival hyperemia, and discomfort (Figure 36-1). It is significant to note that she was presumably healthy up to this point, but the clinician must specifically ask the patient about her general health and ocular history. Also, on slit-lamp examination, the corneal epithelium was intact. It would be important to ask whether the patient awoke with pain or whether her pain was associated with some later event, such as attempted contact lens hydration, lens removal, or replacement.