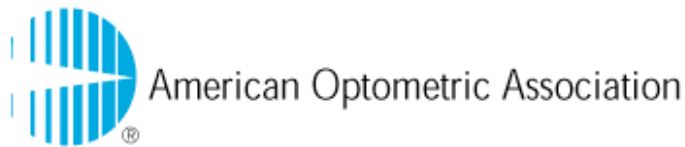


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CONSUMER WARNING: HALLOWEEN EYE WEAR ACCESSORY MAY PERMANENTLY DAMAGE EYES

Consumers should not buy decorative contact lenses without a doctor's prescription and fitting

ST. LOUIS, MO, Oct. 20, 2008 – With Halloween approaching, the American Optometric Association (AOA) is warning consumers about the risks of wearing decorative contact lenses without a prescription from an eye doctor. These non-corrective lenses, which are designed only to change the appearance of the eyes, are easily accessible to consumers and are especially popular around Halloween.

Federal law requires the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate decorative lenses as a medical device, similar to corrective lenses; however, decorative lenses continue to be illegally marketed and distributed directly to consumers through a variety of sources including flea markets, the Internet, beauty salons and convenience stores.

According to the AOA, only a proper medical evaluation from an eye doctor can determine whether or not patients are viable candidates to wear contact lenses, that the lenses fit properly, and if they are capable of wearing lenses without problems.

"Purchasing contact lenses without a prescription can result in serious eye health and vision damage since consumers are not properly educated on cleaning and disinfecting, nor in proper removal and application of the contact lens," said Paul Klein, O.D., chair of the AOA's Contact Lens and Cornea Section. "Without a prescription and wearing instructions from an eye doctor, consumers who wear these contact lenses put themselves at risk of serious bacterial infection, or even significant damage to the eye's ability to function, with the potential for irreversible sight loss."

This warning comes at a time of heightened consumer interest in changing one's eye color. New results from the AOA's American Eye-Q® survey indicate that more than half of all Americans would consider changing the color of their eyes with colored lenses.

Other risks associated with the use of decorative contact lenses include conjunctivitis, swelling, allergic reaction and corneal abrasion due to poor lens fit. Additional medical problems may result in a reduction of visual acuity (sight), contrast sensitivity and other general eye and vision impairments. "Even though they carry no prescription, and may be worn for short periods of time, decorative contact lenses carry the same risks as corrective contact lenses," said Dr. Klein. "Because of this, it's important for consumers utilizing these lenses to familiarize themselves with the information available from an eye doctor, so as to reduce the risk of infection."

Recommendations for Decorative Contact Lens Wearers from the American Optometric Association

1. See an optometrist for a proper fitting and prescription.
2. Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses.
3. Carefully and regularly clean contact lenses, as directed by your optometrist. Rub the contact lenses with fingers and rinse thoroughly before soaking lenses overnight in sufficient multi-purpose solution to completely cover the lens.
4. Store lenses in the proper lens storage case and replace the case at a minimum of every three months. Clean the case after each use, and keep it open and dry between cleanings.
5. Use only products recommended by your optometrist to clean and disinfect your lenses. Saline solution and rewetting drops are not designed to disinfect lenses.
6. Only fresh solution should be used to clean and store contact lenses. Never re-use old solution. Contact lens solution must be changed according to the manufacturer's recommendations, even if the lenses are not used daily.
7. Always follow the recommended contact lens replacement schedule prescribed by your optometrist.
8. Remove contact lenses before swimming or entering a hot tub.
9. See your optometrist for your regularly scheduled contact lens and eye examination.

For more information about the risks of decorative contact lenses, or to find additional resources pertaining to contact lens hygiene and compliance, please visit www.aoa.org.

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):

The American Optometric Association represents approximately 36,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors. Doctors of optometry provide two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States.

American Optometric Association doctors of optometry are highly qualified, trained doctors on the frontline of eye and vision care who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, optometrists play a major role in a patient's overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

Prior to optometry school, optometrists typically complete four years of undergraduate study, culminating in a bachelor's degree. Required undergraduate coursework for pre-optometry students is extensive and covers a wide variety of advanced health, science and mathematics. Optometry school consists of four years of post-graduate, doctoral study concentrating on both the eye and systemic health. In addition to their formal training, doctors of optometry must undergo annual continuing education to stay current on the latest standards of care. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.

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