

Don't Buy Contact Lenses From Any Store or Website If It Doesn't Require a Prescription

Written by Australian Business

Selling lenses without a prescription is illegal and can put consumers' eye health at risk, warns the American Optometric Association

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 3, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Some Halloween enthusiasts may wear decorative contact lenses, which can change a person's eye color or create the effect of a character like a cat, zombie, or vampire, as part of their costume. However, if these lenses are bought without a prescription from an eye doctor, they could lead to serious health issues and potentially damage your eyesight.

All contact lenses are classified as medical devices by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and require a valid prescription, whether they correct your vision or are worn simply for a special occasion, like Halloween, proms or weddings. "Even though these are non-corrective lenses, they still pose the same potential health and safety risks as other contact lenses," said Glenda Secor, O.D., chair of the AOA's Contact Lens and Cornea Section.

However, some decorative lenses are sold illegally through flea markets, the Internet, beauty salons, convenience stores, and even national retailers. The AOA warns that you should never buy lenses from these sources. "When purchased over-the-counter, decorative contact lenses can put people at risk for bacterial infections, allergic reactions, or even significant damage to the eye's ability to function, with the potential for irreversible sight loss. Sadly, numerous cases of serious harm have been documented," added Dr. Secor.

According to the AOA's 2013 American Eye-Q® consumer survey, 17 percent of Americans have worn decorative contact lenses that don't provide vision correction as part of a costume or for other cosmetic purposes. Of those individuals, 24 percent purchased them without a prescription from a source other than an eye doctor — a great concern to doctors of optometry.

"Don't buy contacts from any store or website that doesn't require an eye doctor's prescription," warned Dr. Secor. "In other words, if you can walk in off the street, or log-on to a website and buy them without verification of your prescription, the lenses are not being sold legally."

Don't Buy Contact Lenses From Any Store or Website If It Doesn't Require a Prescription

Written by Australian Business

It's important to have a medical eye and vision examination from your optometrist to be sure you are a good candidate for contact lenses and your cornea can safely tolerate the lenses. Your eye doctor will also make sure your lenses fit properly and teach you how to safely care for your lenses.

"One of the safest things consumers can do is visit an eye doctor for a consultation," said Dr. Secor. "This way they can obtain the proper prescription and lens material, and ensure a healthy contact lens fit, reducing the risk of infection or other serious side effects."

The AOA offers the following recommendations for all contact lens wearers:

- Wear contact lenses only if they are fitted and prescribed by an optometrist.
- Do not purchase contact lenses from gas stations, video stores, websites, or any other place not authorized by law to dispense contact lenses.
- Make sure contact lenses are properly cleaned and disinfected as instructed by your eye-care professional.
- Make sure you wash your hands before handling and cleaning your contact lenses.
- Never swap or share contact lenses with anyone.
- Never sleep while wearing contact lenses unless they are extended-wear lenses specifically designed for that purpose.

For more information about the risks associated with decorative contact lenses, or to find additional resources about contact lens hygiene and safety, please visit <http://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/contact-lenses>

About the American Eye-Q® survey:

The eighth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From March 15-18, 2013 using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level)

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):

The American Optometric Association, a federation of state, student and armed forces optometric associations, was founded in 1898. Today, the AOA is proud to represent the profession of optometry, America's family eye doctors, who take a leading role in an individual's overall eye and vision care, health and well-being. Doctors of optometry (ODs) are the independent primary health care professionals for the eye and have extensive, ongoing training to examine, diagnose, treat and manage disorders, diseases and injuries that affect the eye and visual system, providing two-thirds of primary eye care in the U.S. For information on a variety of eye health and vision topics, and to find an optometrist near you, visit www.aoa.org.

SOURCE American Optometric Association

RELATED LINKS <http://www.aoa.org>