



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 2010**

**For Further Information, Contact:
Mallory Block, WOA Director of Communications
Email: mallorywoaoffice@tds.net
Phone: 608.824.2200**

American Youth Risk Eye Injury with Decorative Contact Lens Trend

Wisconsin Optometric Association warns against use of newly popular 'circle lenses', an illegal eye accessory

A new 'big-eyed trend' is threatening the eye health of American youth. Fashioned by pop celebrities like Lady Gaga, 'circle lenses', which are illegal in the United States, are becoming a more popular fashion accessory for teens and young adults. The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) urges consumers to be aware of the serious risks these accessories pose to eye health.

"Circle lenses are a form of colored contact lenses which come in a variety of shades and designs," explains Dr. Marcus Neitzke, optometrist and WOA president. "The younger generation has become interested in these lenses because of the enlarging effect they have on the eye because they cover parts of the white of the eye."

It is illegal to sell any contact lenses in the United States without a prescription from a licensed eye care professional. Circle lenses are primarily purchased online and are imported to United States consumers, particularly from the Asian region.

"The problem with these lenses, and other decorative contact lenses purchased without a prescription, is that they have not been properly fitted to an individual's eye," said Neitzke. "There are severe risks to using contact lenses that are not FDA approved and have not been prescribed by an eye doctor."

Some of the risks associated with these lenses include conjunctivitis (or Pink Eye), corneal swelling, eye infection, allergic reaction and corneal abrasion. Additional problems may result in reduced visual acuity, contrast sensitivity or peripheral vision.

Last month, the American Optometric Association (AOA), of which the WOA is an affiliate, organized a meeting of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials to discuss concerns regarding the illegal sale of 'circle lenses' and other types of decorative contact lenses.

"With the FDA's focus of 'protecting and promoting health', the recent gathering served as an outstanding platform to brainstorm with FDA officials," stated Joe Ellis, optometrist and president of the AOA. "We found FDA officials were shocked, as well as dismayed, by how easy these lenses can be obtained and how aggressively adolescents and young adults are targeted."

Consumers should not use any contact lenses without a comprehensive eye exam and updated prescription from a licensed eye care provider. To find a Wisconsin optometrist in your area, visit www.woa-eyes.org.

###

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 650 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's Web site at www.woa-eyes.org.