

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 2011

For Further Information, Contact:
David Bobka, WOA Director of Communications
Email: davidwoaoffice@tds.net
Phone: 608.824.2200

AVOID A SCARY HALLOWEEN. ONLY USE PRESCRIPTION COSMETIC CONTACT LENSES
Doctors of Optometry warn consumers not to buy decorative contact lenses without a prescription and fitting

MADISON, WI – Halloween brings fun and festivities to children and adults across the country, with costumes, candy, and parties all playing a large role towards giving this holiday its unique feel and atmosphere. In the world of retail, however, Halloween often equals big business for a variety of stores, as consumers search for ways to maximize the fun factor of their holiday celebration.

One accessory that you will want to avoid this year is the relatively recent trend of wearing decorative contact lenses. These non-corrective strength lenses, which are designed only to change the appearance of the eyes, are easily accessible to consumers and are especially popular around Halloween. Unfortunately, poor fitting and/or improper use of these lenses can cause serious risks to your vision and eye health. As a result, the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) wishes to warn consumers about the risks of wearing decorative contact lenses without a valid prescription from an eye doctor.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates decorative lenses as medical devices, just as they do vision 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. Unfortunately, consumers may also purchase them without a prescription at retail outlets, where they are sold as fashion accessories. This is a direct violation of Federal law.

“Decorative contacts are a concern all year long, but Halloween is the time where they are used most frequently to enhance costumes,” commented Dr. Lisa Slaby, Green Bay area optometrist and current WOA president. “Consumers who purchase lenses without an exam and prescription from an eye doctor 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.”

Risks associated with the improper use of decorative contact lenses include conjunctivitis, swelling, allergic reactions, and corneal abrasions 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.

Recently, the FDA warned consumers about serious risks of eye injury posed by the wearing of non-corrective, decorative contact lenses distributed without a prescription and proper fitting from a licensed eye doctor. This warning came as a result of reports received by the FDA showing the development of corneal ulcers associated with the wearing of decorative contact lenses in excess of the recommended period of time. Corneal ulcers can progress rapidly, leading to internal ocular infection if left untreated; uncontrolled infection can then lead to corneal scarring and vision impairment. In extreme cases, this condition can result in blindness and eye loss.

On June 30, 2011, FoxNews.com reported the story of a girl from New York who suffered serious damage to her vision as a result of the misuse of decorative contact lenses as a fashion accessory. The girl bought the pair of contacts from a local beauty store for \$20. She received poor advice from a sales clerk on how long she could keep the lenses in her eyes and now requires a cornea transplant to restore her sight. The cosmetic lenses were purchased illegally without a prescription from a licensed eye doctor.

The WOA recommends the following tips for those who choose to wear decorative contact lenses this Halloween:

- See an optometrist for your regularly scheduled contact lens and eye exam for a proper fitting and prescription.
- Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses.
- 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.
- Store lenses in the proper lens storage case, and replace the case every three months or sooner. Clean the case after each use, and keep it open and dry between cleanings.
- Use only products recommended by your optometrist to clean and disinfect your lenses. Saline solution and rewetting drops are not designed to disinfect lenses.
- 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.
- Always follow the recommended contact lens replacement schedule prescribed by your optometrist.
- Remove contact lenses before swimming or entering a hot tub.

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 634 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed and certified to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. The WOA also maintains an affiliation with the American Optometric Association (AOA). For more information, visit WOA’s website at www.woa-eyes.org.*