**News Release**

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**Here’s How to Find out if Your Halloween Contact Lenses are Illegal**

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] *and the American Academy of Ophthalmology issue warning on the dangers of wearing costume contact lenses without a prescription*

<INSERT CITY, STATE>– [INSERT DATE] — Spooky contact lenses can complete your Halloween costume. But beware of the dangers of illegal costume contact lenses lurking on store shelves and invading online retailers. Though the federal government works to keep illegal and harmful versions of decorative or color contact lenses off the shelves, they can still be purchased at costume shops, gas stations, corner shops and online. Here’s an easy way to tell if your lenses are counterfeit: Can you purchase them without a prescription? If the answer is yes, those creepy lenses are a danger to your vision. That's why the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](https://www.aao.org/) and [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] are urging people to buy decorative contact lenses only from retailers who require a prescription and sell FDA-approved products.

It’s easy to forget that decorative lenses are medical devices, not costume jewelry. They must be prescribed and fitted by an eye care professional, just like regular [contact lenses](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/contact-lens-102). That's because a poorly fitted contact lens can easily scrape the [cornea](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/anatomy/cornea-103), the outer layer of the eye, making the eye more vulnerable to infection-causing bacteria and viruses. [Research](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21401905) shows that people who purchase contacts without a prescription face a 16-fold increased risk of developing an infection.

To help ensure you won’t be haunted by a ghoulish and painful contact lens-related eye infection, the Academy offers the following tips:

* **See an eye care professional to get a prescription for costume contact lenses**. Packaging that claims “one size fits all” or “no need to see an eye doctor” is false. Get properly fitted by an ophthalmologist (physicians and surgeons who specialize in medical and surgical eye care) or optometrist (healthcare professionals who provide primary vision care).
* **Buy only FDA-approved products**. Buy contacts only from eye care professionals or retailers that require a prescription and sell FDA-approved lenses.
* **Never share contacts**. Sharing contacts can spread germs and bacteria, potentially causing blinding corneal infections and even [pink eye](http://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/pink-eye-conjunctivitis). Again, contact lenses not fitted for your eye can cause vision-threatening damage.
* **Practice good hygiene**. It is important to follow directions for cleaning, disinfecting and wearing costume contacts. See an ophthalmologist right away if you notice any swelling, redness, pain or discharge from wearing contacts. [Watch this one-minute video that highlights proper contact lens wear and care](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/video-protect-sight-from-contact-lens-infections).
* **Limit wear of colored contact lenses to four or five hours**. The dye and less expensive materials used in costume lenses can restrict oxygen flow to the cornea. Less “breathable” lenses are less healthy for the eye. Never sleep in contact lenses, even if you have a prescription.
* **Spread the word to others about the dangers of costume contacts**. Don’t let friends make the mistake of wearing costume contacts without a prescription. It can cost them their vision.

“It’s easy to buy these inexpensive contact lenses on impulse, forgetting that they are medical devices, not costume jewelry,” said Thomas L. Steinemann, MD, a clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “We don’t want to ruin your Halloween, just get a prescription first and only buy FDA-approved lenses.”

[INSERT YOUR SPOKESPERSON’S QUOTE HERE]

To learn more ways to keep your eyes healthy, visit the American Academy of Ophthalmology’s [EyeSmart](https://www.aao.org/eye-health)® website.

**About the American Academy of Ophthalmology**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world’s largest association of eye physicians and surgeons. A global community of 32,000 medical doctors, we protect sight and empower lives by setting the standards for ophthalmic education and advocating for our patients and the public. We innovate to advance our profession and to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality eye care. Our EyeSmart® program provides the public with the most trusted information about eye health. For more information, visit [aao.org](http://www.aao.org/).

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