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KEEP SAFETY IN MIND BEFORE USING DECORATIVE CONTACT LENSES THIS HALLOWEEN

South Dakota Optometric Society reminds consumers of possible eye and vision problems resulting from decorative contact lenses

Pierre, Oct. 7, 2013 – Halloween is all about trick-or-treating and finding a creative costume, but before playing dress up, consumers need to keep their health and safety first. Some enthusiastic partygoers may wear decorative contact lenses as part of their costume, which can change a person's eye color or create the effect of being a character like a cat, zombie, or vampire. However, if these lenses are bought illegally and without a prescription from your eye doctor, they could lead to serious health issues and potentially damage your eyesight. The **South Dakota Optometric Society** recommends talking to your doctor first and obtaining a prescription before incorporating decorative contact lenses as part of your costume.

According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) 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 illegally without a prescription and from a source other than an eye doctor — a great concern to doctors of optometry, who work to ensure your eyes remain healthy.

"Even though these are non-corrective lenses, they still pose the same potential health and safety risks as other contact lenses," said **Dr. Scott Kennedy.** "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 this have been documented."

All contact lenses are classified as medical devices by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, whether they correct your vision or are worn simply for fun or a special occasion, like prom or a wedding. However, some decorative lenses are sold illegally through flea markets, the Internet, beauty salons and convenience stores. The **South Dakota Optometric Society** warns that you should never buy lenses from these sources.

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. 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. Kennedy.** "This way they can obtain the proper prescription and ensure that the lenses fit, so wearers reduce the risk of infection or other serious side effects."

The **South Dakota Optometric Society** 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, or any other vendor not authorized by law to dispense contact lenses.
- Never swim while wearing contact lenses. There is a risk of eye infection when contact lenses come into contact with bacteria in swimming pool water.
- 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 www.aoa.org and/or www.aoa.org.

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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.