



OHIO OPTICAL DISPENSERS BOARD



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AVOID UNEXPECTED HALLOWEEN FRIGHTS BY TAKING A FEW SAFETY STEPS

COLUMBUS, OH – Every year, Americans spend more and more money on Halloween costumes, candy and decorations. In fact, the National Retail Federation estimated that the total Halloween spending for 2007 would reach \$5.07 billion. With the average person spending more than \$23 per costume and close to \$18 on decorations, Prevent Blindness Ohio wants to remind everyone to make sure all Halloween purchases are safe and responsible.

“As the Halloween season approaches it is important to keep in mind an issue that can easily get lost in the craze of creepy costumes: eye safety”, said Sherill Williams, President & CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Colored or decorative non-corrective contact lenses have become a popular element of Halloween costumes. While these devices can add a fun flourish to a costume, they can also result in severe eye injury if used without the appropriate guidance of an eye care professional.”

The decorative contact lenses, **which offer no visual correction**, are sometimes being illegally sold by non-eye care professionals at corner stores, costume shops, beauty shops and video outlets without an appropriate prescription and fitting. Children and teens are able to purchase them without the benefit of being fitted by an eye care professional, and without learning how to properly care for these medical devices. As a result, **children can suffer from devastating eye infections, scarring and even blindness.**

There has been devastating outcomes from the use of cosmetic lenses without proper supervision. A 14-year-old patient nearly lost her eye after contracting a serious bacterial infection. She was hospitalized for four days and was left with a corneal scar that affected her vision. The patient later required a corneal transplant, and needs regular observation and treatment for the rest of her life.

“Many people may not be aware that it is illegal to purchase any contact lens, whether it be corrective or not, without a prescription”, said Nancy Manns, Executive Director, Ohio Optical Dispensers Board. “Contact lenses are classified as medical devices and can only be obtained through a licensed eye care professional.”

“Improper use of contacts can lead to eye infections, corneal injuries and even vision loss,” said Mark Bennett, Executive Director of the Opticians Association of Ohio.

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Prevent Blindness Ohio Offers Halloween Safety Tips

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To protect vision and avoid painful eye injuries, Prevent Blindness Ohio, the Opticians Association of Ohio and the Ohio Optical Dispenser's Board offer these tips:

- Always visit a licensed eye care professional to be fitted for cosmetic contact lenses.
- Never buy contact lenses without a prescription.
- Always clean and disinfect contact lenses according to instructions.
- Always use water-soluble cosmetics or those labeled safe for use with contact lenses. Do not apply skin creams or moisturizers too close to the eyes.
- Never wear opaque lenses if you have any problems with night vision.
- Never share or trade your contact lenses with anyone.
- Be vigilant about older kid's appearance before letting them leave the house. If they are wearing cosmetic contacts, question them about where they got them.
- Never wear costumes that could block vision such as some masks, wigs, hats or eye patches.
- Always wear hypoallergenic or non-toxic make-up. Only adults should apply the make-up to children and remove it with cold cream or eye make-up remover instead of soap.
- False eyelashes should only be applied and removed according to the manufacturers instructions on the product's package.
- Avoid props or accessories that have sharp edges or pointed ends such as pitchforks, spears, knives, swords or wands.

For more information on Halloween safety or contact lens safety, please call Prevent Blindness Ohio at 800-301-2020 or visit www.pbohio.org.

Those who have complaints against illegal sales should contact the Optical Dispensers Board at 614-466-9709, odb@odb.ohio.gov, or fax to 614-995-5392.

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. We serve all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educating millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country's second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a contribution, visit our website at www.pbohio.org or call 800-301-2020.

HALLOWEEN SAFETY PSA

:30 PSA

Halloween is just around the corner and kids of all ages are getting into the spirit by making a fashion statement with decorative contact lenses. This practice is becoming a

growing problem for teens and young adults who buy and use these lenses without proper direction from an eye care professional. The illegal sale of fashion contact lenses by non eye care professionals has led to serious eye complications, even blindness. To get more information and for tips on how to keep your Halloween celebration eye-healthy and safe call Prevent Blindness Ohio at 800-301-2020 or visit www.pbohio.org.

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2008 HALLOWEEN EYE SAFETY FACT SHEET

- Halloween has become a multi-billion dollar industry. According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), American consumers were expected to spend \$5.07 billion on Halloween in 2007, up from \$4.96 billion in 2006.
- Per-person spending increased: the average consumer planned to spend \$64.82 on Halloween, compared to \$59.06 in 2006. (NRF)
- The U.S. Census estimated in 2007 that there were 36 million potential “trick-or-treaters” between the ages of 5 and 13, down 38,000 from 2006. There are an estimated 110.3 million potential stops for trick-or-treaters.
- The average person will spend \$23.33 on Halloween costumes (including children’s and pet’s costumes), though young adults will spend far more. In fact, 18-24 year-olds plan to be the most festive, spending \$34.06 on costumes.
- According to the NRF, approximately 34 percent of adults will dress up in costume on Halloween. Top Halloween costumes for adults in 2007 were witches, pirates, vampires, cats and princesses. For children, the top costumes were princesses, Spider-Man, pirates and witches.
- An estimated one in ten celebrants, or 7.4 million households, plan on dressing their pet in some sort of costume for Halloween. The top five pet costumes are devils, pumpkins, witches, princesses and angels.
- Americans consumed 24.5 pounds of candy per capita in 2007; it is believed a large portion is consumed around Halloween. (U.S. Census)

The following safety tips will help ensure a safe Halloween, free from eye injuries and accidents:

- Wear hypoallergenic make-up. Have an adult apply the make-up and remove it with cold cream or eye make-up remover instead of soap.
- Avoid costumes with masks, wigs, floppy hats or eye patches that block vision.
- Tie hats and scarves securely so they won't slip over children's eyes.
- Avoid costumes that drag on the ground to prevent tripping or falling.
- Do not ride a bike/scooter/skateboard or roller blade while wearing a costume.
- Avoid pointed props such as spears, swords or wands that may harm other children's eyes.
- Wear bright, reflective clothing or decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape/patches.
- Obey all traffic signals—pedestrian and driver.
- Inspect all trick-or-treat items for signs of tampering before allowing children to eat them.
- Carefully inspect any toys or novelty items received by kids age 3 and younger. These may pose a choking hazard. Avoid giving young kids lollipops as the sticks can cause eye injuries.
- Go trick-or-treating in daylight, as it is safer than going after dark. If you must go at night, use a flashlight and go with a group.
- Always visit a licensed eye care professional to be fitted for cosmetic contact lenses.
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