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For more information:

Betsy van Die

1-888-331-2020 ext. 322

HALLOWEEN TRADITIONS AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE

Being Aware of Potential Hazards Can Prevent Eye Injuries

Schaumburg, IL – The Harry Potter Professor McGonagall hat looks magical on Katie, but the huge brim is blocking her vision. Johnny is quite the green ogre in his Shrek mask, but he can't see where he is going and has not even left the house. Halloween traditions such as costumes and trick-or-treat are as American as apple pie, but if proper precautions are not followed, eye injuries can occur. Prevent Blindness America (PBA) offers the following safety tips to help keep your child safe on Halloween:

- Wear hypoallergenic make-up. Have an adult apply the make-up and remove it with cold cream instead of soap. Use make-up in place of masks.
- 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.
- 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.
- Carry a bright flashlight to improve visibility.
- Do not ride a bike/scooter/skateboard or roller blade while wearing a costume.
- 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.

While costumes, masks and even make-up can potentially harm sight, there is an even bigger, growing problem for teens and young adults – cosmetic contact lenses. Statistics show that in 2003, there were nearly 1,100 eye injuries related to contact

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lenses treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms," said Daniel D. Garrett, PBA spokesperson. These cool lenses come in a wide variety of patterns and colors – a popular variety are those that make you look like you have scary cats' eyes. They can be make a very cool fashion statement, especially on Halloween, but these lenses are not toys," added Garrett.

Over-the-counter purchase of these lenses can lead to serious eye complications. These problems include decreased flow of oxygen to the cornea, bacterial infections, swelling, eye pain, sensitivity to light, conjunctivitis (pink eye), corneal scratches, corneal ulceration, and loss of clarity. If left untreated, these conditions can result in permanent eye damage and loss of sight.

PBA offers the following safety tips regarding cosmetic contact lenses:

- 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 friends.
- 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.

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information on contact lenses, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the web at www.preventblindness.org.

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