

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Save the Eyeballs This Halloween!

Cosmetic contact lenses may cost more than you are willing to pay.

The Canadian
Association of
Optometrists



L'Association
canadienne des
optométristes

Ottawa, October 20, 2010 – Tis the season when the best costumes rule! Nowadays many of the best costumes entail decorations from head to toe...and sometimes the eyes, with the use of cosmetic contact lenses. However, there are potentially serious consequences to consider when deciding if altering your eyes will be part of the costume. Optometrists regularly deal with complications arising from contact lens use. Therefore, on behalf of the 4,250 optometrists across the country, the Canadian Association of Optometrists is urging teenagers, parents, and other adults to please see your eye doctor before considering a purchase of cosmetic contact lenses.

There is an abundance of evidence that exists to highlight the potential dangers of using cosmetic contact lenses without professional involvement. This includes Health Canada's own report entitled "Human Health Risk Assessment of Cosmetic Contact Lens" which they undertook in September 2003. The most common problems arise from improper use and handling, which highlights the need for added controls for the dispensing of cosmetic contact lenses.

A recent two year study by the FDA in the US looking at emergency room visits, identified that of all medical devices, contact lenses were the #1 cause for injury in children over 11 years of age. In Canada, cosmetic lenses are not yet classified as medical devices! Corrective contact lenses require a professional, and a prescription in most provinces, to ensure a proper fit for the lens on the eye and provide appropriate use and care information. There is no difference between cosmetic contact lenses and corrective contact lenses in the way they are inserted and interact with the eye.

"We have heard stories of people sharing contact lenses or using saliva to moisten them and these are the kinds of practices that can present complications. Those who have not been instructed by a trained professional do not know these actions can threaten their vision." stated Dr. Kirsten North, President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists. "The draw for cosmetic contact lenses is huge at this time of year and, unfortunately, optometrists across Canada must deal with the after affects. Provincial and federal governments need to take action to control the distribution of these items, because the general public does not appreciate the consequences."

Complications that may result in vision loss include:

- Scratches on the cornea from a poor fit
- Eye infection from improper use and handling
- Either of the above from inferior materials used to make the devices

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The Canadian Association of Optometrists and its partners have been pursuing legislative change for many years pertaining to cosmetic contact lenses. We hope to one day see legislation that requires cosmetic contact lenses to be treated in the same way as corrective lenses.

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To arrange an interview or for more information contact: Leslie Laskarin, Director of Communications, 888-263-4676 x 213 or leslie@opto.ca.

About the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) and Optometry:

The CAO represents approximately 4,250 doctors of optometry in Canada. Doctors of optometry provide two-thirds of all primary eye care in the Canada.

Optometrists are highly qualified, trained doctors on the frontline of eye and vision care who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, optometrists play a major role in a patient's overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes, glaucoma, and others.

Prior to optometry school, optometrists typically complete a bachelor of science degree. Optometry school consists of four years of post-graduate, doctoral study concentrating on both the eye and systemic health. In addition to their formal training, doctors of optometry must undergo annual continuing education to stay current on the latest standards of care.

For more information see www.opto.ca