



Non-Corrective Cosmetic Contact Lenses

Background

Non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses are used to change the colour or appearance of the eyes. Like contact lenses used for visual correction, cosmetic contact lenses can pose a risk of harm due to improper fit, use, or care. Complications such as corneal abrasions, inflammatory reactions, and potentially serious corneal infiltrations or infections can occur (sterile or infectious infiltrative keratitis). Some of these complications can be visually threatening.

All cosmetic contact lenses sold in Canada are now regulated as Class II medical devices. This means manufacturers of non-corrective contact lenses will have to apply for a medical device license to sell the products in Canada. As well, importers and distributors of the products will be required to obtain a medical device establishment license. There are also specific standards for labelling required for Class II medical devices.

Policy Issue

The regulation of non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses as class II medical devices is necessary for consumer protection and patient safety. However, the use of cosmetic contact lenses without a prescription and proper instruction and supervision increases the wearer's risk of complications, including the risk of vision loss. Members of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) are concerned about this risk.

Policy Position

CAO commends Health Canada for recognizing the dangers posed by cosmetic contact lenses and ensuring regulated oversight of the manufacturing, distribution, and labelling of these products. These regulations will help to safeguard the vision of all Canadians.

Due to the risk of harm posed by non-corrective contact lenses, CAO maintains that their use should require a prescription from a regulated eye care professional. A prescription and proper instructions as to the use and care of cosmetic contact lenses will help to minimize the public health risks posed by these medical devices.

If optometrists or consumers wish to report medical device-related incidents, they can do so by completing Health Canada's online Health Product Complaint Form.

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References:

1. Health Canada. Notice: Decorative Contact lenses. Accessed online August 15, 2017: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/activities/announcements/notice-decorative-contact-lenses.html>