



For Immediate Release:

Think Twice if Your Halloween Costume Includes Scary Eyes

Detroit, Oct. 2, 2019 -- Creepy costume lenses might add a spine-tingling thrill to your Halloween costume, but wearing costume contact lenses without a prescription can lead to serious eye [infections](#) or permanent vision loss. Decorative lenses are medical devices, not costume jewelry. They must be prescribed and fitted by an eye care professional, just like regular [contact lenses](#). That's why the Michigan Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons and the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) are urging people to buy decorative contact lenses only from retailers who require a prescription and sell FDA-approved products.

“We want Halloween to be a fun and safe experience for all Michigan residents, said Maura Campbell, spokesperson for MiSEPS. “So as you plan your Halloween costumes, be sure to skip the costume contact lenses. They are just too risky for your eyes and your sight.”

A poorly fitted contact lens can easily scrape the cornea, the outer layer of the eye, making the eye more vulnerable to infection-causing bacteria and viruses. Sometimes scarring from an infection is so bad, a [corneal transplant](#) is required to restore vision. The most extreme cases can end in blindness.

Although it is illegal to sell non-prescription contact lenses, they are available at costume shops, gas stations, corner shops, and online. Research shows that people who purchase contacts without a prescription face a 16-fold increased risk of developing an infection.

Mamie Gaye, 19, is one of those people. She wanted blue eyes, so she purchased a pair of colored contact lenses at her local beauty shop in Cleveland. There was no indication on the package that she needed a prescription. After wearing them for about a week, her eyes were red, burning, and sensitive to light. She had to go to the emergency room just to get them removed. She was terrified that she was going blind. Fortunately, the scratch on her eyes healed after a few days of treatment with antibiotic eye drops.

“My advice to friends is to never buy contact lenses without a prescription, no matter how beautiful you think they will make you,” Gaye said. “It’s not worth it.”

The Academy offers the following tips to help ensure your Halloween costume won’t haunt you long after Oct. 31:

- **See an eye care professional to get a prescription for costume contact lenses.** Packaging that claims “one size fits all” or “no need to see an eye doctor” is false. Get properly fitted by an ophthalmologist (physicians and surgeons who specialize in medical and surgical eye care) or optometrist (healthcare professionals who provide primary vision care).
- **Properly care for contact lenses.** Even if you have a prescription for contact lenses, proper care remains essential. Watch this [video](#) to learn the eight steps to protect your eyes from contact lens infections.

- **Never share contacts.** Pink eye isn't a good look, even for a costume. Sharing contacts can spread germs, causing conditions such as [pink eye](#), which is highly contagious.
- **Spread the word to others about the dangers of costume contacts.** Don't let friends make the mistake of wearing costume contacts without a prescription.

"The FDA oversees the safety and effectiveness of all contact lenses because they are a medical device, even the ghoulish ones people wear on Halloween," said Thomas L. Steinemann, MD, a clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. "It's important that you use only FDA-approved lenses prescribed for your eyes."

To learn more ways to keep your eyes healthy, visit the American Academy of Ophthalmology's [EyeSmart](#)® website.

The Michigan Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons represents Ophthalmologists in Michigan – the eye health professionals who went to medical school. Learn more at www.miseeps.org.

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