



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Consumer Warning: Halloween decorative contact lenses
may permanently damage eyes**

*Consumers should not buy decorative contact lenses without a doctor's
prescription and fitting*

PORTLAND, OR, Oct. 21, 2008 – As you prepare a Halloween costume this year, the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association (OOPA) warns you not to buy or wear decorative contact lenses unless you have a prescription from an eye doctor. The non-corrective lenses that are designed to change the appearance of the eyes are especially popular around Halloween.

Federal law requires the Food and Drug Administration to regulate decorative lenses as a medical device, similar to corrective lenses; however, decorative lenses continue to be illegally marketed and distributed directly to consumers through a variety of sources including flea markets, the Internet, beauty salons and convenience stores.

According to the OOPA and its parent organization, the American Optometric Association (AOA), only a proper medical evaluation from an eye doctor can determine whether or not you are a good candidate to wear contact lenses, and that the lenses fit you properly.

“Purchasing contact lenses without a prescription can result in serious vision damage since most people are not properly educated on how to clean, disinfect, apply or remove the contact lens,” said Dr. Patricia Gates, O.D. Coos Bay. “Consumers who wear these contact lenses without proper instructions or prescriptions put themselves at risk of serious bacterial infection, or significant damage to the eye’s ability to function, with the potential for irreversible sight loss.”

Other risks associated with the use of decorative contact lenses include inflammation, swelling, allergic reaction and corneal abrasion due to poor lens fit.

If you intend to wear decorative contact lenses this Halloween, the OOPA makes the following five recommendations:

1. See an optometric physician for a fitting and prescription.
2. Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses.
3. Carefully and regularly clean contact lenses by rubbing them with fingers and rinsing thoroughly. Soak lenses overnight in a solution recommended by your eye doctor.
4. Store lenses in the proper case that is cleaned after each use and kept open and dry between cleanings.
5. Remove contact lenses before swimming or entering a hot tub.

For more information about the risks of decorative contact lenses, or to find additional resources pertaining to contact lens hygiene and compliance, please visit www.oregonoptometry.org or www.aoa.org.



About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of Doctors of Optometry, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has nearly 400 members. For more information, visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):

The American Optometric Association represents approximately 36,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors. Doctors of optometry provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.