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Potential Halloween Danger: Cosmetic Contact Lenses

Philadelphia, Pa. – The Eye Institute (TEI) of Salus University is urging consumers and the general public to steer clear of colored and decorative contact lenses – a potential Halloween danger.

According to the National Retail Federation, Americans plan to spend an average of \$3.2 billion annually on Halloween costumes, apparel and accessories; one of the most popular of which are cosmetic contact lenses. However, optometrists at TEI say that wearing these decorative accessories can come with a price.

“Harmful chemicals from these lenses can get into the cornea and the complications can be quite serious,” said Dr. Joel Silbert, Chief of TEI’s Cornea & Contact Lens Service.

The process used to color the surface of the lenses can cause scratches to the cornea and the lenses themselves have been linked to numerous visual health conditions ranging from infections to conjunctivitis and impaired vision.

Contact lenses are considered medical devices, and are therefore managed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The colorful knock off lenses, typically purchased from novelty stores, street vendors and online, are not approved by the FDA.

According to [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#), the lenses are typically sold at seasonal, holiday-themed and novelty stores, street vendors and online – all without an examination or prescription. Contact lenses – even those for cosmetic purposes - should only be purchased from an optometrist or other licensed eye care professional (including retailers) who require a prescription.

“If the lenses are suitable and approved by the FDA, the results can be beautiful but a patient needs an examination and the lenses must be dispensed properly,” said Dr. Silbert. “It’s not worth going blind.”

Dr. Silbert also stresses the importance of proper [contact lens safety](#) with the following tips to remember:

- Never sleep in your contact lenses unless your doctor's prescription allows.
- Keep water away from your contact lenses. Contacts can absorb water and any bacteria it contains, which can lead to eye infections.
- Always wash your hands before touching your eyes or your contact lenses.
- Store your lenses in the proper cleaning or storage solution – never in tap water.
- Never wear a pair of contact lenses longer than prescribed by your optometrist.

Dr. Silbert is available for an interview on the topic of contact lens safety.

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About Salus University

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Public Health, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology. Salus operates four clinical facilities in the Philadelphia area that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students, including PhD candidates, and more than 14,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.