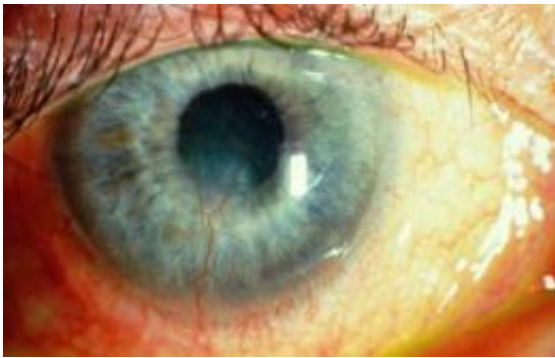


Don't get tricked into hurting your eyes with unsafe contact lenses for Halloween

October 25 2011, By Jim Dryden



Redness and infection in the eye of a patient who wore decorative contact lenses without a prescription. Credit: Mary K. Migneco, OD

(Medical Xpress) -- Some people think it's cool to give themselves "cat" eyes, "wolf" eyes or really bloodshot eyes for Halloween. That's possible with decorative contact lenses, but an optometrist at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis says beware.

Decorative [contact lenses](#) — also known as fashion, color, cosmetic or theatre contact lenses — change the look of the eyes, but they don't correct vision. If used incorrectly, the lenses can impair vision and damage the eyes warns Mary K. Migneco, OD, instructor in ophthalmology and visual sciences.

"Decorative lenses can be worn safely, and they can enhance your

Halloween costume, but if they don't fit properly, or you're not a suitable candidate for contact lenses, you're asking for trouble," she says.

People can buy the lenses at costume shops, beauty salons and from other vendors who are not qualified to sell medical devices such as contact lenses. She recommends such lenses be purchased only from a qualified health professional.

"Costume shop [Halloween](#) contact lenses come only as 'one-size-fits-all,'" she says. "But one size does not fit all. You can only determine proper fit with an eye exam."

Any contact lenses can cause serious eye damage if used incorrectly. If the lenses don't fit properly or the individual wearing them has very dry eyes, that person will be at risk for scratches on the surface of the eye, known as corneal abrasions. Allergic reactions to the lenses also are common, as are diminished vision and infections.

"Any sort of wound on the eye can provide an opening for bacteria," she explains. "That can lead to scarring of the eye. And if the scarring is permanent, a person can suffer vision loss."

Scratches on the cornea also are extremely painful.

"On a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the most painful, patients often rate a corneal abrasion as a 10," she says.

To reduce risk of eye injury, Migneco says it's important to get contact lenses from an [eye](#) care professional. Follow instructions about cleaning, disinfecting and wearing the lenses, and never borrow lenses from a friend, even for only one night.

Provided by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

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