Costume contact lenses pose dangers

October 18 2013, by Meredith Cohn

Wearing cosmetic contact lenses might seem like a nice way to finish off a good Halloween costume, but they can cause serious eye injury, according to an association of ophthalmologists.

Non-prescription contacts have been illegal since 2005 because they are considered medical devices, but are still available in some stores and online, and customers seeking to augment their holiday outfits.

Wearing them can result in permanent vision loss, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology. They may not be manufactured to meet federal health and safety standards, the group says, and cause cuts and sores in the protective layer of the iris and pupil or bacterial infections. That could necessitate surgery or vision loss.

"What happens to people's eyes after just one evening of wearing non-prescription costume contact lenses is tragic," said Dr. Thomas Steinemann, professor of ophthalmology at MetroHealth Medical Center and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and a spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

The statement from Steinemann continued: "It all could have been avoided if these patients just took a little extra time to obtain a prescription and only wore FDA-approved lenses. I understand how tempting it is to dress up your eyes on Halloween without a prescription and using over-the-counter lenses, but people should not let one night of fun ruin their vision for a lifetime."

For more information, go to geteyesmart.org .

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Citation: Costume contact lenses pose dangers (2013, October 18) retrieved 25 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-10-costume-contact-lenses-pose-dangers.html

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