



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CDPH Warns Consumers about Risks of Wearing Decorative Contact Lenses

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today warned consumers about the risks associated with wearing decorative contact lenses.

“Wearing any kind of contact lens, including decorative lenses, without proper consultation of an eye care professional can cause serious injury,” Dr. Smith said. “The risks include infection, ulcers, decreased vision, cuts or scratches to the surface of the eye, itchiness or redness. If these conditions are left untreated, the injuries can progress rapidly. In severe cases, blindness and eye loss can occur.”

The sale of contact lenses without a prescription is illegal. Only Board of Optometry licensed optometrists and ophthalmologists are authorized to prescribe and dispense prescription contact lenses. Medical Board of California registered opticians and optical shops are authorized to fill contact lens prescriptions.

Decorative contact lenses are intended to temporarily change the appearance of the eye, but do not correct vision. Advertised as color, cosmetic, fashion and theatrical contact lenses, they are especially popular around Halloween. Decorative contact lenses are typically sold at beauty supply and novelty stores.



Consumers who have experienced any injury or illness with decorative contact lenses should contact their health care provider. Consumers can report the illegal sale of decorative contact lenses without a prescription to CDPH’s Food and Drug Branch Hotline at 1-800-495-3232 to initiate an investigation.

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