



MIKE DEWINE
 ★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★



OHIO OPTICAL DISPENSERS BOARD
 77 SOUTH HIGH ST. 16TH FLOOR
 COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-6108
 (614) 466-9709 FAX (614) 995-5392
 www.optical.ohio.gov
 e-mail: odb@odb.ohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 18, 2012

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Prevent Blindness Ohio:
Stacie Lehman (800) 301-2020 ext. 105
staciel@pb ohio.org

Attorney General's Office:
Dan Tierney (614) 466-3840
Dan.tierney@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

Ohio Optical Dispensers Board:
Nancy Manns (614) 466-9707
NManns@odb.ohio.gov

**DeWine Joins Prevent Blindness Ohio, Ohio Optical Dispensers Board
 To Stop Dangerous Sales of Cosmetic Contact Lenses**

(Columbus, Ohio) – Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine along with Prevent Blindness Ohio and the Ohio Optical Dispensers Board are warning consumers about the dangers of over-the-counter sales of decorative contact lenses during this Halloween season. According to the Optical Dispensers Board, the number of consumer complaints filed regarding the illegal sale of cosmetic contact lenses and the number of resulting cease and desist orders issued to violating businesses have shown a steady increase after a period of decline, not only during the Halloween season, but all year long.

In fiscal year 2009, the Optical Dispensers Board issued 13 cease and desist orders based on consumer complaints. In fiscal years 2010 and 2011, 12 and 16 respectively, such orders were issued. In the fiscal year 2012 (starting July 1, 2011), 15 cease and desist orders were issued.

“Whether it’s Halloween or any time of year, decorative contact lenses sold over-the-counter can be a health and vision hazard,” said Attorney General DeWine. “These kinds of sales are also illegal. That’s why all contact lenses are classified as medical devices and can only be distributed by licensed eye care professionals.”

DeWine strongly encourages Ohioans to report the illegal sales to the Ohio Optical Dispensers Board at (614) 466-9709.

“Decorative contacts in various styles and colors have become increasingly trendy in making a fashion statement, especially for teens. And, colored or decorative non-corrective contact lenses have become a popular element of Halloween costumes. While these lenses can add a fun flourish to a costume, they can also result in devastating eye infections, scarring and even blindness,” said Sherry Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio.

Eye pain, bacterial infections, and corneal ulcers are caused by ill-fitting lenses. One study found that wearing decorative lenses increased the risk for developing keratitis, a potentially blinding infection that causes an ulcer in the eye. This increased risk was more than 16 times likely than those seen in vision correcting (“regular”) lenses.

“I’ve seen many young patients who were not aware of the dangers of these products and are now living with permanent vision loss”, said Thomas L. Steinemann, MD, Professor of Ophthalmology at Case Western Reserve University and Prevent Blindness Ohio volunteer. “Parents should be on the alert to protect their children’s vision by assuring that their contact lenses are worn only under the supervision of an eye doctor.”

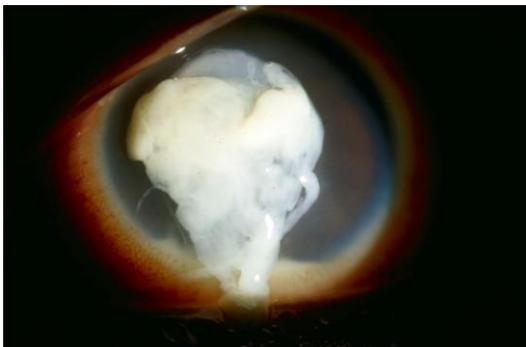
The mission of the Optical Dispensers Board is to protect the public by regulating the practice of the dispensing of all contact lenses, whether worn for corrective or decorative purposes. Legally, all contact lenses must be purchased with a valid prescription. Black market decorative contact lenses have been made available to the public at such places as gas stations, beauty supply stores and Halloween costume shops. These black market lenses are sold to the public without the benefit of a proper fit or education about the care and use of the contact lenses from qualified, licensed eye care professionals.

“The Optical Dispensers Board wants to remind the public that it is illegal for businesses to sell cosmetic contact lenses, even the contact lenses that provide no visual correction, without requiring a prescription from an eye doctor. In addition, only a licensed optician, ophthalmologist or optometrist has the authority to dispense contact lenses. We encourage the ophthalmic community and citizens of Ohio to report illegal sales and dispensing of contact lenses.” said Nancy Manns, Executive Director of the Ohio Optical Dispensers Board. “The Optical Dispensers Board is committed to continue the fight against the illegal sales of contact lenses and will continue to work with Attorney General DeWine’s office to stop this dangerous practice.”

Prevent Blindness Ohio offers the following safety tips regarding cosmetic contact lenses:

- Always visit a licensed eye care professional to be fitted for cosmetic contact lenses.
- Never buy contact lenses without a prescription.
- Always clean and disinfect contact lenses according to instructions.
- Always use water-soluble cosmetics or those labeled safe for use with contact lenses. Do not apply skin creams or moisturizers too close to the eyes.
- Never wear opaque lenses if you have any problems with night vision.
- Never share or trade your contact lenses with anyone.
- Be watchful about your child’s or teen’s appearance. If they are wearing cosmetic contacts, question them about where they obtained them.

Consumers with questions about purchasing cosmetic contact lenses may contact the Ohio Optical Dispensers Board at (614) 466-9709 or www.optical.ohio.gov.



Serious eye injuries caused by illegally sold cosmetic contact lenses.

Photo credit: Dr. Thomas L. Steinemann