

Kelly Mitchell, M.D.

Do you recommend costume contact lenses?

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That's an easy answer. And the answer is really no contact lenses are a medical device and they should be prescribed by a physician skilled at prescribing contact lenses an optometrist or an ophthalmologist. Because not only does the contact lens have focusing power, which I think all of us recognize, like our glasses do, but because contact lenses actually ride on top right on top of the surface of your eye, they have to be custom fit for everybody's eye individually. In fact, even between the two eyes of the same person, their contact lenses may actually have a different fit, design.

How do costume contacts differ from normal contacts?

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Wearing a contact lens for a Halloween or any type of costume that you buy at a costume store, instead of your eye doctor, you're really you're really exposing your eyes to a significant risk because those are basically curved pieces of plastic that may have the external color that allows you to appear like a zombie or maybe a cat or, or some other type of Halloween character that you'd like to you'd like to portray, but they're not made in the same careful sterile way, clean way FDA approved way that contact lenses that your optometrist or ophthalmologist will prescribe for you.

How can costume contacts damage your eye?

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Some of the risk that I that I worry about with contact lenses. In this type these costume Halloween themed or any type of costume themed contact lens is that the way that they're made, they're not made by a medical company that's got FDA approval to make contact lenses in a safe and sterile way. They're basically taking small pieces of plastic and making them look like contact lenses. And so the inside of them are basically could be rough plastic. And if you put those on your eye, you could end up with a conjunctivitis, which is basically the fancy word for pinkeye. That conjunctivitis could be from a small trauma from the edge of the contact lens or a more serious infection. Maybe a little bacteria was on the edge of that contact lens and gave the white part of your eye a little infection but probably more importantly is your cornea, which is the clear part of the eye that rests right above the colored part of everybody's eye. And if that were to get roughed up for have an abrasion and get an infection that could really leave that person with a permanent and a severe loss of vision. So that's why my first, second and third answer is please don't wear those contact lenses just to make your Halloween costume more impressive.

Where should people buy contacts from?

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You should only buy contact lenses which are medical devices from licensed health care providers, either ophthalmologist or optometrist who are who are trained and licensed in every state to prescribe those. Buying contact lenses from other individuals means that you're not getting the same type of professional evaluation or fitting and so really only buy your contact lenses, or at least the prescription the fitting from your optometrist and your ophthalmologist because there are once you have your prescription determined by your own eye doctor there are very reputable online places where they ask you to type in your doctor's address and prescription number and then they'll send you they'll send you

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the contact lenses but certainly buying costume contact lenses at a at a at a flea market or at a at a roadside stand really is quite risky and I would not recommend it at all.

What should you do if you think you've damaged your eye with a costume contact?

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So if you do in fact make the decision to wear contact lenses that are really just to add to the look of your Halloween costume. And then afterwards, you feel that the eye is red or irritated at that when you realize that it's best at that moment that you seek medical attention. You should be seen by either go to an emergency room. If certainly if the discomfort is notably severe, they will most likely given the history of wearing a costume based contact lens, they will likely call a call an eye doctor that's on call to come see you because some of the severe injuries are very subtle at the early stage of the patient feeling the symptoms. But if we identify those early in a lot of patients, we can minimize the injury that was done. So please seek immediate medical attention.

Should people share contacts?

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You should not share contact lenses with friends or anybody whether they're your own prescription contact lenses, or costume contact lenses, it's too risky.

What are other ways a costume can damage your eye?

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I think the probably the next thing to worry about is a poor fitting mask, whether it's something that just goes over your eyes and nose or something that you pull over your ear that your whole face. If it's too tight, it could compress on your eye and injure it that way. If it's too loose, the upper part could sag inward and strike a part of your eye that could cause an injury. And also to the opening that you're to look through could be so small that it restricts your field of view and you may run into something while walking, you could trip and fall or if you're wearing the mask while you're driving a vehicle that can be quite dangerous. So make sure whatever mask that you wear is well fitted and it does not compress on your eye or restrict your field of view.