

# Are Costume Contacts Safe For Halloween?



Want decorative contacts for your Halloween or cosplay costume? It takes more than a quick run to the Halloween store.

Avoid the scare of serious eye injury or permanent damage to your eye from costume contacts with a trip to an optometrist or ophthalmologist before you buy. Whether you want vampire, zombie, "circle eye" or other specialty contacts, keep in mind having these festive Halloween looks requires getting a medical device – contact lenses.

Buying costume contacts off the shelf or online may seem convenient. But **it's illegal to sell any contact lenses without a prescription** in the United States. Using knock-off contacts could be dangerous to your eye health.

## What Are The Risks Of Buying Costume Contacts?

Buying costume contact lenses without a prescription offers extra risks. You may not know if the contacts were made with the right materials or in clean conditions. The Journal of Forensic Sciences found that 60 percent of counterfeit **contact lenses were found positive for microbial contamination**. Another study found several over-the-counter costume lenses **tested positive for chlorine** and other harmful chemicals.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology reports that at least **13,500 emergency room cases each year are due to contact lens injuries**.

## Do Costume Contacts Have Other Potential Health Risks To Your Eyes?

Non-prescription costume contacts can cut, scratch and infect your eye if they don't fit exactly right. They can lead to allergic reactions, bacterial infections, corneal scrapes or ulcers, and even blindness. The paints and pigments for color lenses also make the contacts thicker and less breathable, possibly allowing less oxygen to the eye.

## Can I Layer Costume Contacts Over Prescription Contacts?

**Layering contacts is not safe for your eyes**, as it can reduce oxygen to the eyes and impact the prescription component.

## More Tips For Costume Contacts Wearers

Costume contacts are just part of your Halloween or cosplay look. Take note of these safety tips for wearing cosmetics when you have contacts, whether for Halloween or daily use.

- Don't share contact lenses or cosmetics with others. Either will spread bacteria and germs.
- Use proper contact hygiene.
- Do not sleep in costume contacts.
- Wash your hands before putting in or taking out your contact lenses.
- Apply makeup after inserting the contact lenses.
- Keep false eyelash glue, nail polish and remover, and perfume and cologne away from contacts.
- Avoid metallic, pearlized or glittery types of eye shadow, which are common causes of eye irritation and infection in people who wear contacts.
- Don't apply eyeliner to the inner edge of the lid or above the lash line on the lower lid.

If eyes become red or irritated, remove the lenses immediately and talk to your **ophthalmologist** or **optometrist**. Don't reuse the lens or ignore the irritation.