

Cosmetic contact lenses, often called zero-power or plano lenses can make quite a fashion statement. But this particular fashion statement can have some serious health risks. The lenses have been bought without prescription at boutiques, beach shops, tattoo parlors, and other nonprofessional retail vendors. There have been many cases of teenagers who nearly lost their eyesight as a result of improper use of these lenses.

Teens seem to be the biggest fans of these lenses. They cite reasons from "they look really cool" to they "want to look like their favorite rock star who wears them". However, many teens do not take necessary precautions with the lenses and that is why they develop eye problems.

Prevent Blindness America believes, along with other vision organizations, that these lenses must be classified as medical devices, under the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA had such a policy in place until April 2003, at which time they decided to reclassify cosmetic lenses as cosmetics.

Contacts are not Cosmetics

Classifying cosmetic contact lenses in the same category as eye shadow, mascara and lipstick does not make sense. While there are some risks associated with eye cosmetics, there are more health risks when you put a foreign object in your eye.

What are the risks?

Contact lenses are relatively safe, however, complications can occur. Problems such as eye pain, bacterial infections and corneal ulcers are caused by improper use of lenses or solutions. These problems also arise when patients try to take shortcuts like using lenses for a longer period of time than indicated or not using adequate cleaning and soaking solutions.



Learn more about
women's eye health at
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Contact Lens Safety Tips

- Always visit a licensed eye care professional to be fitted for contact lenses.
- Always wear contact lenses under the supervision of an eye care professional.
- Always clean and disinfect contact lenses according to instructions.
- Always store contact lenses properly in a clean storage case.
- 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 buy contact lenses without a prescription.
- Never go to sleep while wearing cosmetic lenses.
- Never wear opaque lenses if you have any problems with night vision.
- Never share or trade your contact lenses with friends.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you experience any pain, irritation, redness, blurriness or visual changes.

To find out more about Prevent Blindness America's public policy initiatives, visit us online at PreventBlindness.org/advocacy.