



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photos Attached

Spooking It Up Can Be An Eyeful

Keeping Halloween Costumes From Causing Eye Injuries

(Honolulu, Hawaii), October 16, 2012 – An estimated 71.5% of Americans plan to celebrate Halloween this year, with \$2.5 billion expected to be spent on costumes alone, according to the National Retail Federation. Trick-or-treaters young and old should not only focus on having the scariest or cutest costume, but also make sure to protect their eyes. The eyes are very susceptible to injuries from the use of decorative contact lenses, makeup and props, which can lead to temporary discomfort or even long-term damage.

“Dressing up for Halloween can be fun for the whole family, but it’s a good idea to be mindful of the things we choose to put in and around our eyes,” shared Dr. Christopher Tortora, M.D., Hawaiian Eye Center. “Simple precautions can help keep everyone’s eyes safe and still make Halloween an exciting time for all.”

Decorative, non-prescription contact lenses have become very popular during Halloween but are not recommended for a variety of reasons. Many party supply and costume stores are not licensed to sell contacts, and the manufacturers that supply them are typically unlicensed as well. This makes it dangerous for consumers because the contacts may be made with low-quality plastic and even toxic dyes.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends only using contacts—even non-prescription lenses—that are prescribed by a licensed eye care specialist. This helps reduce the chance of eye problems including serious infections that can lead to blindness. Seeing a specialist is necessary to determine the proper fit of the contacts. Proper care and use are critical, and eye care professionals can fully educate their patients on all the necessary information.

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Makeup and face paint are also widely used to complete a costume, but it's important to be careful when using them around the eyes to prevent any adverse reactions. The Food and Drug Administration warns consumers to make sure any makeup or face paint they purchase is hypo-allergenic and that any color additives in the product are FDA-approved for use on or near the eyes (a list of color additives in cosmetics can be found at www.fda.gov). If any makeup does get into the eyes, flush out with cool water.

The last thing to top off any good costume is usually a prop or two, which should be chosen wisely. It's a good idea to steer clear of any accessories that are sharp and pointed, especially for young children. Swords and knives are very popular choices, but make sure all props are made of soft or flexible materials to help decrease the risk of any accidents. Sharp edges on masks and hats can also increase the risk of a poke to the eye.

Young children need to be especially careful with masks and costumes that may block their vision. Good visibility is important, especially when trick-or-treating after dark. Wearing costumes that are easily seen at night and using flashers or reflective tape is highly recommended to increase safety by improving visibility to passing motorists.

With any eye injuries that are persistent or appear to be serious, it's important to see a doctor as soon as possible. Halloween costumes can continue to be scary and festive this season, while taking simple precautions to help minimize the chance of accidents that can irritate or damage the eyes.

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of "The Hawaiian Eye Show," a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call the Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8488 or visit www.HawaiianEye.com, where "*life has never looked better.*"

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