

Considerations When Buying Contact Lenses On-line

1. The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) urges consumers to follow advice on buying contact lenses safely. The CAO is concerned following reports of cases of contact lens wearers experiencing eye health problems after buying lenses without getting proper eye care and advice. Dr. Kirsten North, President, CAO, said: "*Any contact lens is in direct contact with the eye. That carries a risk of irritation and infection, especially if instructions are not carefully followed, which could lead to long term problems for the wearer. It's incredibly important to have a fitting before wearing contact lenses for the first time, and to have regular check-ups. Contact lens wearers should get professional advice to avoid putting their eyesight at risk.*"
2. Two studiesⁱⁱ confirm increased risks associated with purchasing contact lenses online. The risk of serious infection was found to be nearly five times higher. As well, consumers who bought contact lenses from sources other than their eye care practitioner were found to be less likely to comply with good eye care practices.
3. Sales of contact lenses are regulated to protect consumers from eye health problems. Unfortunately, in Canada, internet retailers are not legally obligated to check customers' 'specifications', issued by their contact lens practitioner, before supplying corrective lenses. It is a matter of 'buyer beware' for the public.
4. Contact lenses are classified as Medical Devices by Health Canada. See the HC site on 'Buying Medical Devices over the Internet': www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/med_mat-eng.php
5. For more information about contact lens wear, visit the CAO website: www.opto.ca/en/public/04_eye_info/04_02_04_contact_lenses.asp
6. The CAO website also has a 'find an optometrist' feature to book an appointment for an eye health examination or contact lens assessment.

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- i. *The incidence of and risk factors for contact lens related microbial keratitis in Australia and New Zealand* [Edwards, Catherine Patrice, Optometry & Vision Science, Faculty of Science, UNSW handle.unsw.edu.au/1959.4/39717](http://www.handle.unsw.edu.au/1959.4/39717)
 - ii. *Contact lenses purchased over the Internet place individuals potentially at risk for harmful eye care practices; Joshua Fogel, Ph.D., and Chaya Zidile* www.aoa.org/documents/optm-447-Fogel.pdf