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TO: Local Health Departments, Regional Offices of Illinois Department of Public Health

FROM: Illinois Department of Public Health
Illinois Department of Profession Regulation

DATE: March 7, 2011

SUBJECT: **Prescription-only Contact Lenses**

The Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation want to remind health care professionals and consumers about the dangers of purchasing contact lenses without a prescription.

Only eye care professionals licensed in Illinois are authorized to prescribe contact lenses. Without a prescription, it is against the law to sell lenses. Ill fitting contact lenses can scratch the eye, cause bacteria to build up and cause permanent scarring, limit the amount of oxygen to the eye, lead to a misdiagnosis of pinkeye or cause eye ulcers, which can cause partial or total blindness.

Common Sense Tips for Safe Use

- Wear contact lenses only if they are fitted and prescribed by an eye-care professional.
- Do not purchase lenses from flea markets, beauty supply stores or costume shops.
- Never swim while wearing contact lenses. There is a risk of eye infection when contact lenses come into contact with bacteria found in pool water.
- Make sure lenses are properly cleaned, disinfected and stored.
- Wash your hands before handling your contact lenses.
- Never swap or share your contact lenses with anyone.
- Follow manufacturer's or eye-care professional's instructions to replace and discard used lenses.

Minimize risk of infection

- Replace your contact lens case every 3-6 months.
- Always use fresh contact solution.
- Remove your lenses at night, even if they are designed for extended wear – they reduce the amount of oxygen that gets to the cornea which can stress your eyes and make them more prone to infection.

Symptoms of Eye Irritation or Infection – Seek Professional Care immediately

- Discomfort, swelling and/or pain.
- Excessive tearing or other discharge.
- Unusual sensitivity to light.
- Itching, burning or gritty feeling.
- Unusual redness.
- Blurred vision.

For more information:

<http://www.idfpr.com/NEWSRLS/2011/03072011ContactLens.asp>