

Buying Contact Lenses Online or by Mail

Buying contact lenses on the Internet, by phone, or by mail can be handy. But buyers should beware.

- You need an up to date, correct prescription. Your state laws set the rules for when a prescription expires. Some give one year, others two.
- The prescription should include:
 - your name
 - your doctor's name
 - the contact lens brand and material
 - lens measurements

Some prescriptions include whether lenses are for day-by-day or extended wear, the number of refills, and the date it expires.

- Internet sites and mail-order sellers must get your doctor's approval of the prescription. If they don't, they are breaking federal law. That's why many ask for your doctor's name and phone number. Some states require written prescriptions.
- Order your lenses from a seller you know you can trust.
- Ask for the manufacturer's written information for your contact lenses. It will tell you how to use the product. And it will advise you about the risks and benefits.

Don't Take a Chance on Using an Old Prescription

- Ask your eye doctor how often you should have a check-up. See the doctor as scheduled. The checkups give your doctor a chance to check the fit of your lenses and change your prescription as your eyes change. Badly fitting lenses can hurt your eyes.
- Always contact your doctor for medical advice. A doctor can see early signs of damage that can lead to serious problems, even blindness. You may not notice these signs in their early stages.

Make Sure You Get What You Asked For

Watch out! Some online or mail-order sellers may send you a different brand. Contact lenses may look the same, but materials and shapes change by brand. Be sure you get what you asked for. Make sure that the company gives you this information:

- brand name
- lens name
- power
- sphere
- cylinder, if any
- axis, if any
- diameter, base curve, and peripheral curves, if any

To Report a Problem:

- Contact the company if you don't get the lenses you ordered, or if there's a problem with shipping or delivery.
- Do you think a contact-lens website is making false claims or not following the rules on prescriptions? If yes, send an e-mail to webcomplaints@ora.fda.gov.
- If contact lenses cause serious eye problems, first go to your doctor. Then report it to FDA's MedWatch program. Fill out the form at www.fda.gov/medwatch.

BUYING CONTACTS

Buying Contact Lenses Online or by Mail (cont.)

To Learn More:

Visit www.fda.gov/cdrh/consumer/buycontactqa.html

Or call 301-827-3990 to reach the FDA Consumer Affairs Staff in Radiological Health.

Always contact your doctor for medical advice.