

# FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Division of Consumer & Business Education

## The Eyes Have It — Get Your Prescription

Millions of Americans wear glasses or contact lenses. And they have many choices in how, where, and from whom to buy their prescription eyewear: providers such as optometrists, ophthalmologists, and dispensing opticians, and sellers such as specialty shops, large wholesale stores, mail-order and online retailers.

When you're considering whether to buy your eyewear from an eye care provider or another seller, chances are you'll consider cost and convenience. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, enforces the Contact Lens and Eyeglass Rules, which increase the "portability" of your contact lens and eyeglass prescriptions. When you're buying contact lenses or prescription eyeglasses, the FTC recommends that you:

**Get your prescription.** Your eye care provider must give you a copy of your contact lens and eyeglass prescriptions — whether or not you ask for them. You should get your eyeglass prescription at the end of your eye exam, and your contact lens prescription when your fitting is complete. Fitting contacts may involve more than one appointment.

**Keep your prescription.** File it with your other medical records. Keeping your prescriptions current and in a convenient place can reduce delays in getting your eyewear.

**Send your prescription for contacts.** You may choose to buy contacts from a seller who's not your eye care provider. If you do, you may want to fax or send the copy of your prescription directly to the seller to expedite the process. In any case, the seller must verify your prescription with your eye care provider before filling your order. But you can start the process by giving the seller certain information about your prescription — for example, the type of lenses, their manufacturer, power, base curve, and diameter.

Keep in mind that all contact lenses, even those that are cosmetic — lenses meant to change the appearance of your eye rather than correct your vision — require a prescription.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

[ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov)

1-877-FTC-HELP

FOR THE CONSUMER

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