

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

The Eyes Have It — Get Your Prescription

Millions of Americans wear glasses or contact lenses to correct their vision. And they have many choices in how, where, and from whom to buy their prescription eye wear: 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 eye wear 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 prescription contact lenses or 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 eye wear.
- **Send your prescription.** When you order contact lenses from a seller other than your eye care provider, you may want to fax or send the copy of your prescription yourself.
- **Verify your prescription for contacts.** You may choose to buy contacts from a seller who's not your eye care provider. If you can't fax or send a copy of your prescription directly to the seller, ask the seller to verify your prescription with your eye care provider. Start the process by giving the seller certain information about your prescription: the information you need (for example, the type of lenses, their manufacturer, power, base curve, and diameter) is on your prescription. The seller must verify your prescription with your eye care provider before filling your order.

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 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.