

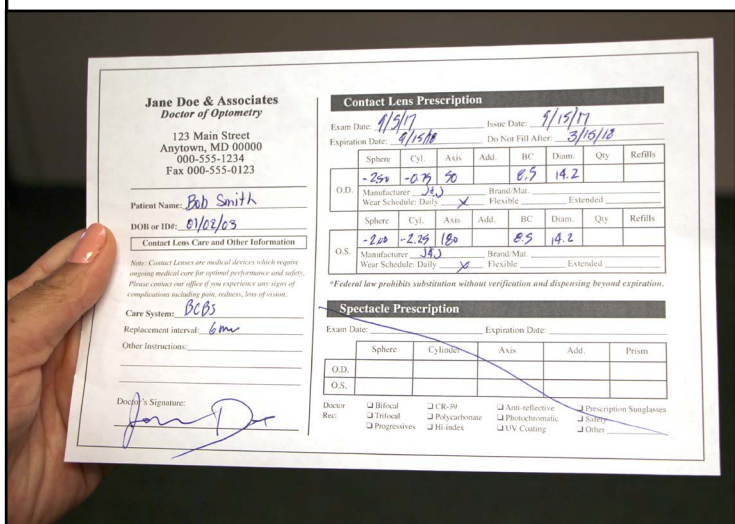
CONSUMER'S EDGE

CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION, MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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YOUR RIGHT TO YOUR CONTACT LENS PRESCRIPTION

A Maryland college student was away at school in Ohio and she ran out of contact lenses. She contacted her ophthalmologist to get a copy of her prescription so she could order more online. The ophthalmologist refused to give her the prescription saying the lenses had to be ordered through his office. The consumer paid \$50 a box rather than the \$25 she would have paid to the online supplier even though her prescription was less than a year old.



For years, many consumers were unable to get their contact lens prescriptions from their eye doctor when they needed to order replacement lenses. They had to order the replacement lenses from the eye doctor who wrote the prescription and pay whatever price was quoted. Many people found that frustrating, since they wanted the freedom to shop around and take advantage of the potential savings and convenience offered by direct-to-consumer lens suppliers. Wearers of disposable soft lenses especially were interested in that option, since they replace their lenses frequently.

State and Federal law give consumers the right to obtain their contact lens prescription so they can buy replacement lenses from any authorized seller.

Getting Your Prescription

For each new prescription, you must visit an optometrist or ophthalmologist for an eye examination and contact lens fitting. Once it is determined that the lenses fit and that no additional follow up is needed, your eye doctor is required to give you a written prescription for your contact lenses. Here's how the law works:

- The prescription must include all of the information necessary for it to be properly filled, including the name of the lens manufacturer, the type of lens, the power, base curve, lens size, your name, the date the prescription was given to you, the eye doctor's name and office location, and the expiration date of the prescription.
- The prescription should be valid for two years from the time you were first examined unless your eye doctor gives a valid clinical reason for an earlier expiration date and documents the reason in your medical record.
- If you need another copy of the prescription within the expiration period, at no cost to you, the eye doctor must provide a copy of the replacement contact lens prescription to you or someone you designate — a mail-order lens supplier, for example — within seven business days of your request. The prescription may be transmitted by mail, telephone, fax or e-mail.
- If, after your next examination, your prescription has not changed since your last examination, the eye doctor must give you the prescription without requiring you to purchase contact lenses or undergo immediate follow-up care.

Your eye doctor may give you a written statement that wearing improperly fitted contact lenses may cause harm to your eyes and that you should have an eye



examination if there are any changes to your vision, including pain or vision loss. These laws give you the freedom to buy replacement lenses from the supplier of your choice. But remember that contact lenses are important health care devices that require proper fitting and care. You still need to see your eye doctor for regular eye examinations and advice on proper lens use to keep your eyes healthy.

Types of Eye Care Specialists

Ophthalmologists are medical doctors (M.D.'s) or osteopathic physicians (D.O.'s) who diagnose and treat diseases of the eye. They can prescribe drugs, perform examinations and eye surgery, and prescribe and dispense eyeglasses and contact lenses.

Optometrists hold a doctor of optometry degree (O.D.). Though they are not medical doctors, they can examine eyes to detect, diagnose, and treat vision problems and eye diseases. They can prescribe and dispense eyeglasses and contact lenses.

Opticians are not doctors. They fill prescriptions for eye-wear written by ophthalmologists and optometrists. They may not examine eyes or prescribe eyeglasses or contact lenses.

If you have any questions about this law, call the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit at 410-528-1840 or 1-877-261-8807.



HOW TO CONTACT US

Consumer Protection Division

200 St. Paul Place, 16th Fl., Baltimore, MD 21202

- **General Consumer Complaints:** 410-528-8662
Toll-free: 1-888-743-0023 TDD: 410-576-6372
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday
www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/CPD/
- **Health Consumer Complaints:** 410-528-1840
Toll-free: 1-877-261-8807 TDD: 410-576-6372
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday
www.marylandcares.org
- **For information on branch offices** in Largo, Salisbury, Hagerstown, and a full list of offices across Maryland, visit:
www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/contactus.aspx

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