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## Buying Contact Lenses

Contact lens sales are regulated by both the FDA and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Before you buy any contact lenses from someone other than your eye care professional, the FDA wants you to be a wise consumer. With a valid contact lens prescription, it is possible to purchase your contact lenses from stores, the Internet, over the phone or by mail. The following questions and answers should help you take simple precautions to make your purchase safe and effective.

### What do I need to consider when buying contact lenses?

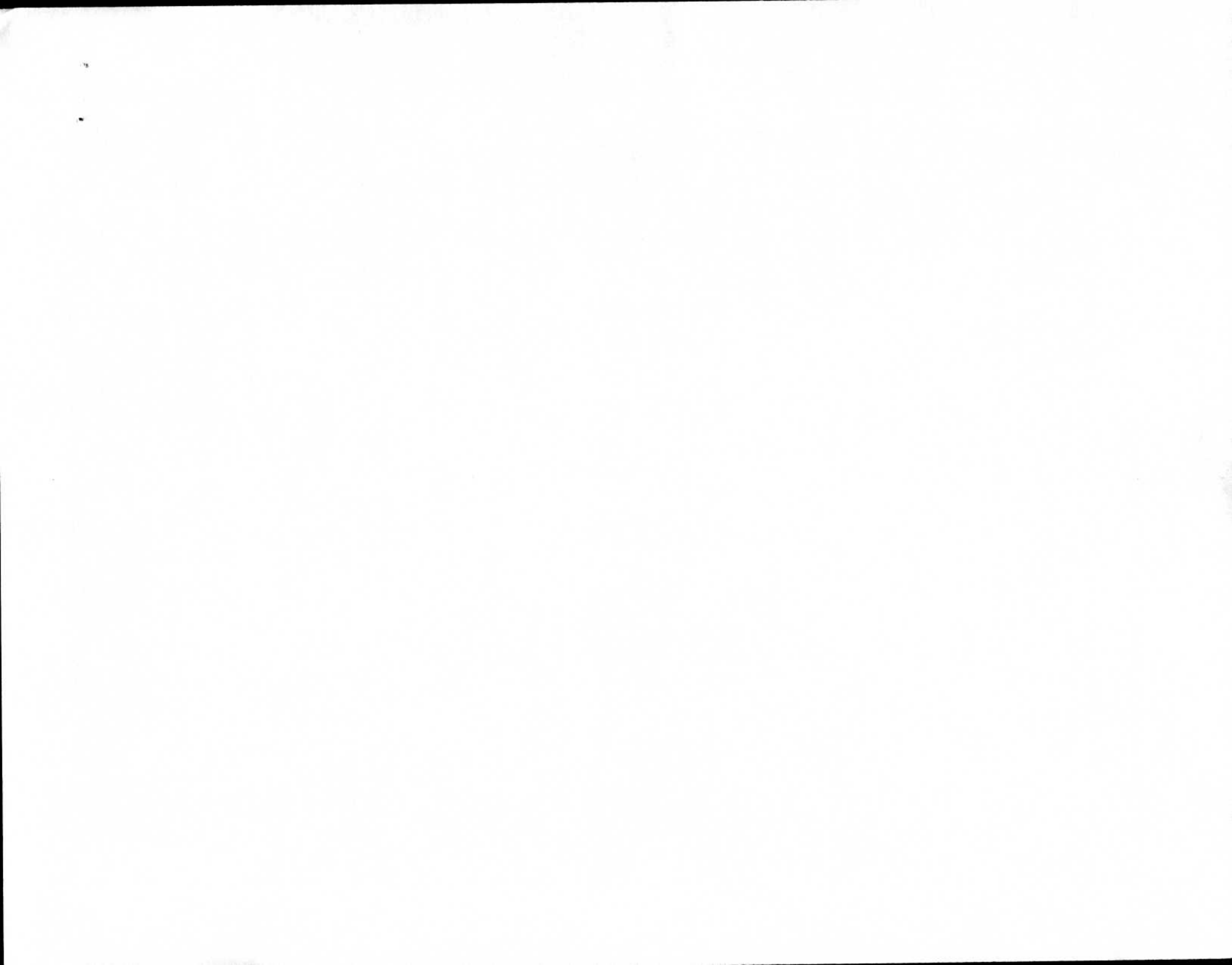
- Is your contact lens prescription current? You should always have a current, valid prescription when you order contact lenses.
- If you have not had a check-up in the last one to two years, you may have problems with your eyes that you are not aware of, or your contact lenses may not correct your vision well.
- The expiration date for your prescription is currently set by your state. Some require a one-year renewal, some a two-year renewal. If your state has not set a minimum expiration date, Federal regulation sets a one year date unless your eye care professional determines that there's a medical reason for less than one year.
- To be sure that your eyes remain healthy you should not order lenses with a prescription that has expired or stock up on lenses right before the prescription is about to expire. It's safer to be re-checked by your eye care professional.

### What does a valid contact lens prescription include?

As defined by FTC regulations, a prescription should contain sufficient information for a seller to completely and accurately fill the prescription. This includes the following items:

- Patient's name
- Examination date
- Date patient receives prescription after a contact lens fitting (issue date) and expiration date of prescription
- Name, address, phone number and fax number of prescriber
- Power
- Material and/or manufacturer of the prescribed contact lens
- Base curve or appropriate designation of the prescribed contact lens
- Diameter, when appropriate, of the prescribed contact lens
- For a private label contact lens, the name of the manufacturer, trade name of the private label brand, and if applicable, trade name of equivalent brand name

### Will I get in legal trouble if I buy contact lenses without a copy of my prescription?



- You won't break any laws, but the company is selling you a prescription device as if it were an over-the-counter device. In legal terms, this misbrands the device. The company is also violating FTC regulations by selling you contact lenses without having your prescription. For more information, see the [FTC website](#).

### **What can I do to avoid serious problems when buying my contact lenses?**

- Order your contact lenses from a supplier you are familiar with and know is reliable. Contact lenses are often more complex than they appear.
- Request the manufacturer's written patient information for your contact lenses. It will give you important risk/benefit information as well as instructions for use.
- Beware of attempts to substitute a different brand than you presently have. While this may be acceptable in some situations, there are differences in the water content and shape between different brands. The correct choice of which lens is right for you should be based only on an examination by your eye care professional, not over the phone.
- Carefully check to make sure the company gives you the
  - exact brand
  - lens name
  - power
    - sphere
    - cylinder, if any
    - axis, if any
  - diameter
  - base curve
  - peripheral curves, if any

If you think you have received an incorrect lens, check with your eye care professional. Don't accept a substitution unless your eye care professional approves it.

### **Where can I report problems that I have when buying contact lenses?**

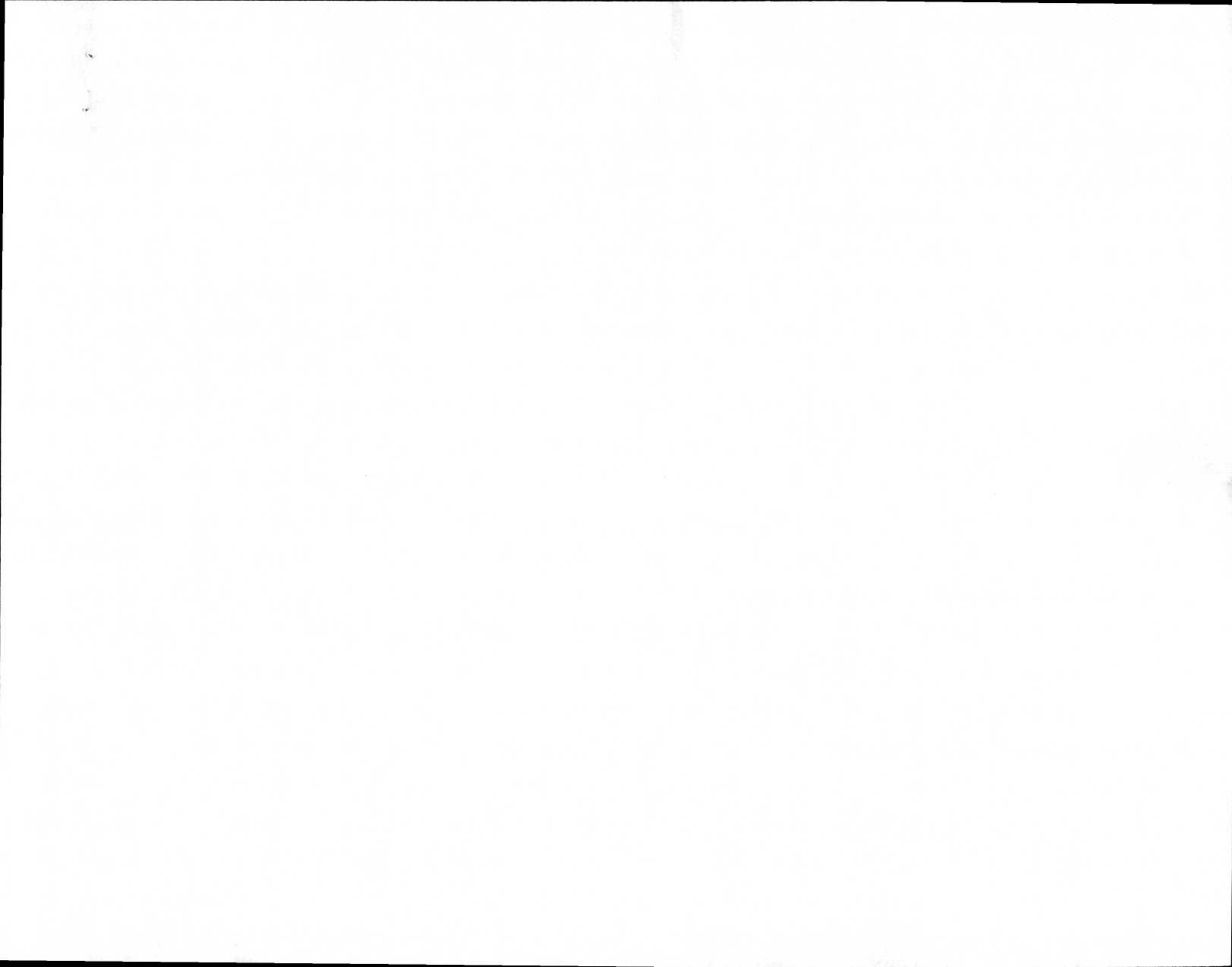
- If you find a Web site you think is illegally selling contact lenses over the Web, you should [report it to FDA](#).
- If you do not get the exact lenses that you ordered, you should report the problem directly to the company that supplied them.
- To file a complaint about prescribing practices to FTC, use the [FTC Consumer Complaint Form](#).

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Center for Devices and Radiological Health / CDRH



(a) An optometrist shall use professional judgment to determine what services are to be provided to his patients. Records of the actual services rendered shall be maintained for a minimum of 5 years after the last consultation with a patient. Records shall indicate when a referral has been made to a physician. An examination may include[, **but is not limited to,**] the following:

\* \* \* \* \*

(2) **[Naked] Uncorrected** visual acuity.

\* \* \* \* \*

(14) Visual fields [, **central (after age 40)**] including manual or automated perimetry.

\* \* \* \* \*

**(19) Pharmaceutical agents used or prescribed, including strength, dosage, number of refills and adverse reaction, if applicable.**

(b) An optometrist shall comply with a patient request for a copy of the patient's spectacle prescription, within 2 years of the patient's last eye examination. Requests for spectacle prescriptions from examinations over 2 years prior to the request[, **or for contact lens prescriptions,**] may be complied with at the discretion of the optometrist. **Requests for contact lens prescriptions may be complied with at the discretion of the optometrist.**

(c) **[An optometrist's license number shall appear on each prescription written by that optometrist.] An optometrist who, in his discretion, provides a contact lens prescription, shall comply with the following:**

(1) **The optometrist shall determine the requirements for a satisfactory fit of a contact lens prior to providing a contact lens prescription.**

(2) **The optometrist shall consider the contact lenses used in determining the contact lens prescription to be diagnostic lenses.**

### **§ 23.72. Prescriptions.**

(a) **Optometric prescriptions shall bear:**

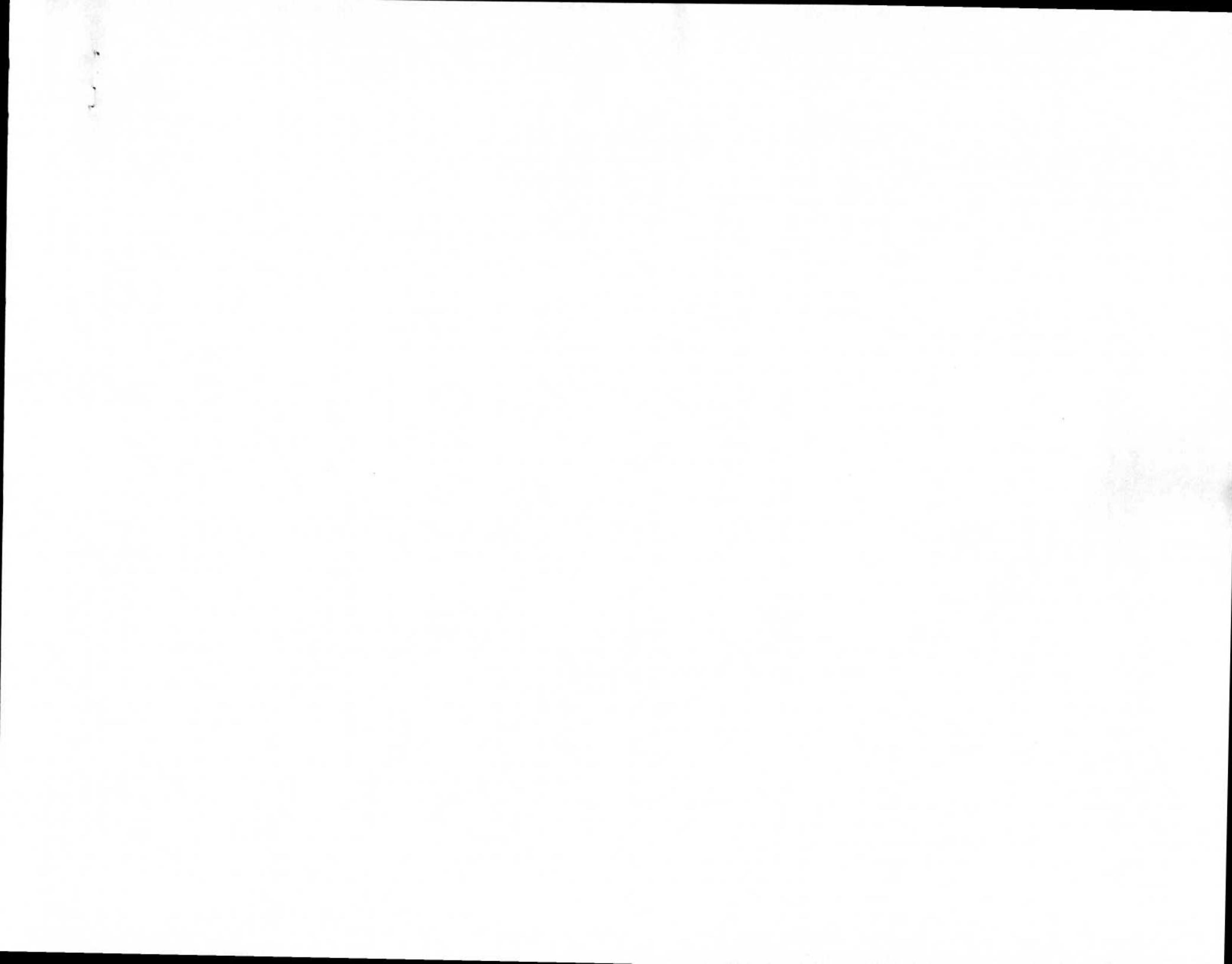
(1) **The name, address and license number of the optometrist.**

(2) **The name of the patient.**

(3) **The date the prescription is issued by the licensed practitioner.**

(4) **The expiration date.**

**(b) Contact lens prescriptions shall specify the lens type, the specifications necessary for the ordering and fabrication of the lenses, number of refills and expiration date**



consistent with the type and modality of use of the contact lens being prescribed, but in no case shall the expiration date be greater than 1 year. The prescription may include a statement of caution or a disclaimer if the statement or disclaimer is supported by appropriate findings and documented in the patient's medical record.

(c) Pharmaceutical prescriptions shall specify the name of the drug prescribed, quantity and potency prescribed, expiration date, number of refills allowed, instructions for use and any indicated precautionary statements.

(d) Spectacle prescriptions shall specify any information that would be relevant to manufacturing glasses including the dioptic value of the sphere, astigmatism, prism, slab off, add power and axis or orientation of the astigmatism correction.

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