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May 24, 2007 8:29 am US/Central

Survey: Prices For Contacts, Glasses Range Widely



Angela Davis (http://wcco.com/bios/local_bio_321131610.html)
Reporting

(WCCO) If you or someone in your home wears contacts or eyeglasses then you want to hear what the latest issue of Twin Cities Consumers Checkbook (<http://www.checkbook.org>) says about stores that sells them.

They looked at prices and the quality of service at 142 eyewear outlets across the metro and found a wide range in prices for the same products and a wide range in feedback from customers in the quality of service they say they received.

For example, they discovered that an identical pair of eyeglasses ranged in price from \$184 to \$418, depending on which of the area's opticians or optometrists you use.

For a one year supply of continuous-wear disposable contact lenses -- including the eye exam, fitting and follow-up visits -- costs varied from \$179 to \$624.

Checkbook's research found that chains and franchise operations were rated lower by consumers than independent firms, with regard to quality of service. But among large chains, Costco had the highest rating, and some of the best prices for contacts.

With the independent shops, they found many of them do offer below-average prices on eyeglasses, but some have prices more than 15 percent higher than the all-firm average.

"Some of these eyeglass outlets were rated superior by more than 80 percent of their customers, for some it was well below 40 percent of their customers giving them favorable," said Robert Krughoff, president of Twin Cities Consumer Checkbook. "So there is a substantial difference in quality of these outlets, and also dramatic differences in price."

As for contacts, if you buy them from an independent optician or optometrist, you may be getting a deal or you may be overpaying. The Checkbook survey found prices for contacts at those independent businesses ranged from 47 percent below the all-firm average to 61 percent above the all-firm average.

To get the full Twin Cities Consumers Checkbook article on eyeglasses and contacts, you have to subscribe at their Web site. But here is a short list of some of the opticians who received the top rating for quality:

Optical Studio
3790 Coon Rapids Blvd NW, Coon Rapids

Shakopee Vision Center
287 Marshall Road, Shakopee

Rivertown Optical
1011 N. Frontage Rd, Hastings

Calhoun Vision Center
3234 W. Lake St., Minneapolis