

COVID – 19 Update from OOM

In addition to the information that was sent out yesterday, it is important as health care professionals who work in close proximity to patients, opticians should take reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of spreading infections like COVID-19 in the practice environment to protect both patients and health care practitioners. Opticians should use their professional judgment to continue to provide essential care to their patients in a safe and competent manner.

Continuity of Care for Patients

If your optical dispensary remains open, we recommend you apply the following measures as needed;

- Strategically schedule appointments with patients to reduce the number of patients in the dispensary at one time.
- Post signs in your dispensary asking patients who are feeling unwell to reschedule.
- Include messaging on your website, via voicemail and/or via email asking patients to reschedule if unwell and advising delivery options for contact lens patients where applicable.
- Upon their arrival at the dispensary, notify patients that as part of your health and safety procedures, you would like to ask them the following questions:
 - Are they experiencing fever, cough, or shortness of breath?
 - Have they recently returned from travel outside of Canada?
 - Have they interacted with someone who is suspected or confirmed to carry the virus?
- Depending on patient responses, you may need to reschedule appointments as needed.

Reducing proximity to Patients

With respect to close proximity with patients, opticians must use their professional judgment and may consider the following steps:

- Using previous measurements from the patient's record if they are an established patient and are applicable (for example, PD measurement). In this scenario, it should be well documented in the patient record that a new measurement wasn't taken and explained to the patient that this is not usual or best practice but given the circumstances you advise it at this time.
- Measuring PD using a penlight and ruler rather than a pupilometer. This practice typically places the optician further away from the patient.
- Maintaining as much distance as possible when taking other necessary measurements.
- Asking patients to put on and remove frames themselves whenever possible.
- Dispensing glasses without an adjustment. This should only be done if, using professional judgment, the optician believes it to be a low risk practice. In this scenario, it should be well documented in the patient record that the glasses were dispensed without an adjustment and

explained to the patient that this is not usual or best practice. The Patient should be encouraged to return at a later date for their adjustment – this should also be documented in the patient record.

Please note that one should always follow all the OOM governing documents including practice directions and guidelines, bylaws, policies, whenever they can, however, if due to circumstances directly related to COVID -19 and you need to stray from the regulations, then make sure you document in great detail what has occurred and why, including dates in the medical record. This way should a complaint be brought against you; you will have documentation to support why you made the decision you did.

Infection Control

For the health and safety of your patients and staff it is vitally important to practice diligent infection prevention and control measures. Some infection control procedures we recommend are as follows:

- Disinfect surfaces, frames and equipment between patients and frequently clean other equipment (including phones, payment terminal and door handles, mouse for computers, keyboards, etc.).
 - We recommend following the [“CDC guidelines for disinfection of surfaces”](#).
 - Diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol and most common [“EPA-registered household disinfectants”](#) should be effective.
 - To avoid frames being tried on by another patient before they have been disinfected, opticians and other staff should direct patients trying on frames to avoid returning them to the frame bar.
 - An optician or another staff member should assist patients and collect frames as they are tried on.
- Wash hands throughout patient interactions and between patients.
 - We recommend referring to the Public Health Agency of Canada [“Hand Hygiene Practices in Healthcare Settings”](#) for more information.

For additional information about clean and disinfecting in health care settings, please consult the [“Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings”](#) published by the Government of Canada.

Pandemic Planning

In light of the quickly changing landscape as the COVID-19 virus progresses, it’s a good idea for each optical dispensary to:

- Have a plan for employee illness/quarantine.
- Have a discussion and plan for any government mandated closure of retail locations.
- Ensure each employee understands and engages in proper infection prevention and control procedures.

AGM and Practice Information Evening

As the spread of COVID-19 continues and the Government of Manitoba has issued a restriction on gatherings of over 50 people, considering this, the OOM will be cancelling the AGM and Practice Audit Information evening that was to be held on April 26, 2020. We will try and reschedule when circumstances allow.

A special thank you to the ACAO for allowing us to use much of this information.