



OPTOMETRY AND COVID-19

Tips for protecting your practice (Current as of 25/3/2020)

SHOULD I REMAIN OPEN?

- The current advice is that you can keep your practice open **as long as social distancing** is in force. (This advice may change to seeing urgent patients only.)
- This means one person (including staff) per 4m² of floor space and a minimum of 1.5 meters (two arm-lengths) from others.
- This currently includes practices in shopping centres as well as highstreet and independent practices. (25/3/20)

WHEN SHOULD I NOT BE AT WORK?

1. Optometrists and their staff must not come to work if unwell or have any symptoms of COVID-19, particularly any sign of:

- sore throat
- dry cough
- fever

If you suspect you or your staff have COVID-19, get tested so you can advise your previous patients immediately.

2. You should seriously consider staying home if you are in a higher risk category for serious COVID-19 disease, including if you are:

- Over 65 (especially if you are / have been a smoker)
- Suffering from asthma, a respiratory or heart condition or diabetes

WHEN SHOULD I CLOSE MY PRACTICE?

- If you or one of your staff or one of your patients is confirmed through testing to have COVID-19, you must [close the practice for disinfection](#). (Click the above link for full details).
- [All practice staff](#) must be quarantined for 14 days.
- Contact patient lists to advise them they must self-isolate and quarantine for 14 days.
- Request that your staff take their temperature before work and report any symptoms of upper respiratory tract infection

HOW DO I PROTECT MY PATIENTS AND STAFF?

Screen all patients via telephone the day BEFORE their appointment by asking these 4 questions:

1. Have you returned from overseas or a cruise in the past 14 days. (If you suspect they have, due to comments made at the time of booking, ask them to send a photo of their travel itinerary via SMS so you can confirm their date of arrival).
2. Have you had contact with anyone with COVID-19 within past 14 days?
3. Do you have any symptoms of sore throat, dry cough, fever, running nose or sneezing?
4. If you are over 65, or have underlying health issues, can your appointment wait a few months (i.e. not urgent)?

SCREENING PATIENTS

- If a patient answers YES to any of these questions, postpone their appointment at least two weeks (or longer in the case of non-urgent older/infirm patients).
- Hearing your staff ask these questions prior to appointment will reassure your healthy patients that they are unlikely to come in contact with the virus at your practice.
- For passing trade / walk-in patients, these questions should be asked immediately on arrival and at least 1.5 meters from anyone else. It is also recommended to display these questions on a sign at reception and request people do not approach if they answer yes.
- If they answer yes to any question, reschedule for at least 2 weeks' time.

URGENT PATIENTS

Urgent patients with risk factors for COVID-19 require a different approach.

This applies to urgent patients who are:

- over 65 with active respiratory disease, poor health or history of smoking
- symptomatic of COVID-19 even if they have not been tested (any age)

This includes masking immediately on arrival and for the duration of their visit, which should be as short as possible and unaccompanied (if possible).

‘Urgent’ may mean

- medically urgent, e.g. sudden loss of vision, painful red eye, painful white eye
- visually urgent, e.g. lost or broken only pair of glasses or contact lenses

A HYGIENIC PRACTICE

Apart from screening patient in advance, here are some other things to do to reassure your patients that your practice is a hygienic environment:

- Insist on the use of hand sanitiser at reception immediately on arrival.
- In the event that you cannot get hand sanitiser, direct clients and patient to the nearest sink for thorough hand washing with soap immediately on arrival.
- Wipe down door handles, reception desks, chairs, pens etc. regularly with disinfectant wipes (e.g Dettol wipes, Alco-wipes or Sugar soap wipes).
- If you are having trouble getting these items, try Bunnings, OfficeWorks and Mitre 10, as well as online channels such as eBay.

A HYGIENIC PRACTICE...

Consultation rooms should be disinfected in between each patient:

- Wipe down all practice equipment with alcohol wipes, including phoropter, slit lamp, pre-testing equipment, occluder, patient chair, reading chart etc.
- Avoid direct ophthalmoscopy!
- Avoid tonometry / gonioscopy unless absolutely indicated and disinfect probes / lenses immediately.
- Avoid close proximity to patients as much as possible and keep small talk to a minimum.
- Avoid having family members in the consulting room.
- Where tonometry IS indicated, single-use tonometry tips are most hygienic. (Some sources have indicated that NCT is best avoided)
- Patients can return for non-urgent tonometry, gonioscopy, hard lens fitting etc when the COVID crisis has abated.

A HYGIENIC PRACTICE

Optical frames and sunglasses should be wiped down with disinfectant or detergent between each patient:

- Avoid use of alcohol wipes or sugar soap on rubberised equipment or acetate frames
- Paper towel and household cleaning spray are useful to wipe down frames between patients
- Ask patients **NOT** to return frames to shelves, but to place them on a tray for cleaning prior to replacement
- Offer powder-free disposable rubber gloves (available from hardware stores such as Mitre 10) to patients to use while trying frames

CONTACT LENS ORDERS

- Contact your database to advise if they are dependent on disposable contact lenses, to consider ordering a 6-month supply including solutions, where required. (Do not permit stockpiling of more than 6 month supply per patient).
- Encourage phone / email orders of contact lenses and postage rather than delivery. Overnight postage satchels are ideal.
- The same applies to anyone dependent on custom contact lenses or even glasses – ordering a spare lens or pair of glasses is wise as supply chains may be affected.
- Consider stock levels of your most popular contact lens solutions in case supply chains are affected.

MORE INFORMATION...

What if my practice is forced to shut down due to COVID-19?

[CLICK HERE](#) for answers

Need more information on BUSINESS ASSISTANCE during COVID-19?

[CLICK HERE](#)

STAY SAFE!

