



Do you know all the things that an optometrist can do?

As primary healthcare professionals, registered optometrists must have completed an approved university degree to be able to practice. All entry-level optometrists are now also able to prescribe topical medicines for the clinical management of acute and chronic eye conditions and ocular disease. Many optometrists have also undertaken postgraduate qualifications to obtain this endorsement, with approximately half of the optometry workforce now therapeutically endorsed. Optometrists are registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

SERVICES

Optometrists are qualified and equipped to provide a comprehensive range of primary eye care services.

- Refractive testing and comprehensive vision examinations
- Prescription of glasses or contact lenses
- Assessment, management and referrals of ocular emergencies
- Assessment and treatment of vision problems in children
- Co-management and primary care monitoring of patients with ongoing eye conditions
- Primary eye care for management of patients with diabetes, including dilated fundus examination
- Visual acuity testing, slit lamp examination, visual fields testing
- Removal of embedded corneal foreign bodies
- Assessment and reporting for fitness to drive; credentialed optometrists are also able to undertake examinations for aviation licensing on behalf of CASA.

WHO DO OPTOMETRISTS WORK WITH?

Optometrists work with a wide variety of health practitioners and medical specialists. Patients with a referral from an optometrist are able to obtain Medicare rebates for ophthalmology services. Optometrists also communicate with general medical practitioners, and a range of health care workers including diabetologists and endocrinologists, paediatricians, neurologists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, education psychologists and diabetes educators.

SCHEDULED MEDICINES

Endorsed optometrists use topical preparations of:

- antibiotics;
- anti-inflammatories;
- antivirals;
- glaucoma treatments;
- anti-allergy medications, and
- cycloplegics.

Therapeutically-endorsed optometrists are qualified and equipped to:

- examine, treat or refer patients with ocular disease, superficial infection and anterior eye disease
- triage and treat or facilitate management of 'red eye'
- triage and manage ocular emergencies and embedded corneal foreign bodies
- provide primary care and prescription treatment for conditions such as dry eye and allergy
- assess/monitor and treat glaucoma in conjunction with ophthalmologists
- provide after-care for cataract and refractive surgery
- assess and treat infections or complications arising from contact lens use.

SPECIFIC PRACTITIONER EXPERIENCE

There are optometrists available with particular practice experience in:

- children's vision
- contact lenses
- conditions such as ocular allergy and dry eye
- sports vision
- low vision
- eye health assessments and care in Indigenous community settings.

OPTOMETRY AND MEDICARE

A Medicare rebate is available for most optometry services. Bulk-billing is subject to individual practice policies. Patients are entitled to rebates for comprehensive eye examinations every three years (under 65) or annually (65 and over). There are also rebates for:

- dilated fundus examination in diabetic patients
- patients with new symptoms or signs of eye disease, or progressive changes in existing eye problems
- some contact lens prescribing
- visual fields in patients with suspicious symptoms
- corneal foreign body removal
- patient end support telehealth with ophthalmologists in rural/remote settings.

Services not covered by Medicare may attract a fee.

GLASSES AND CONTACT LENSES

Medicare does not pay for glasses or contact lenses. The Department of Veterans Affairs pays for glasses each two years for eligible patients. An optometrist can advise on state-based subsidy programs for low income earners and Indigenous people.

EQUIPMENT

Ask your community optometrist about the range of equipment and technologies they have available to get a comprehensive view of a patient's eye health.

Slit lamp	A biomicroscope for examining the anterior eye under high magnification
Phoropter/refractor head	Used to measure refractive error and best corrected visual acuity
Direct ophthalmoscope	Used to view the internal components of the eye; an essential for checking for changes and monitoring for cataract, retinal changes, and eye diseases.
Binocular indirect ophthalmoscope	Provides a 3D view of the posterior eye
Retinoscope	Used to measure refractive error and accommodation
Tonometer	A tonometer measures intraocular pressures (IOPs)
Keratometer	For measuring the shape of the cornea; an important piece of equipment for contact lens practitioners.
Fundus (retinal) camera	The retinal camera is used to take photos of the internal posterior eye, showing the retina, optic disc, arteries and veins. Retinal photos provide an important baseline and ongoing patient record for many conditions.
Visual fields analyser	Computerised visual fields testing (perimetry) is used in the assessment and management of glaucoma, as well as stroke or other neurological conditions affecting vision.
Gonioscope	This lens with prisms enables the optometrist to get a more complex and complete view of the inside of the eye, and the angle of the anterior chamber. This is an important tool in comprehensive glaucoma management.
Optical Coherence Tomographer (OCT)	Many optometrists use OCT to digitally image the optic nerve and retina. Optometrists may also refer patients for this service.
Corneal topographer	This accurately maps the cornea, and is frequently used in contact lens management or patients with keratoconus.

FIND AN OPTOMETRIST

www.optometry.org.au/

- Find optometrists in your local area, use drop-down menu to identify therapeutically endorsed optometrists.
- Contact your Optometry Australia state body for information or referral for services including low vision services, subsidised spectacles schemes, or an optometrist with a particular area of clinical interest and experience.

PATIENT INFORMATION

www.goodvisionforlife.com.au