

# Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

## QUESTION INDEX

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>ONTARIO REOPENING PLANS AND EMERGENCY ORDERS .....</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| Q: How does Step 3 of Reopening Ontario affect opticians? .....  | 4        |
| Q: Do I have to keep the doors locked? .....   | 4        |
| Q: My dispensary is located in a mall. Am I allowed to remain open? .....  | 4        |
| <b>COVID-19 VACCINE .....</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| Q: When will opticians be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination? .....   | 4        |
| Q: Have opticians been prioritized to receive their second dose of the COVID-19 at a shorter interval? ...   | 4        |
| Q: Are opticians required to be vaccinated against COVID-19? .....   | 5        |
| Q: I'm fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Do I still need to wear a mask/PPE? .....  | 5        |
| Q: Can/should I require my employees/interns/students to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in order to work with patients? .....  | 5        |
| Q: Do I have to disclose my vaccine status to my patients? .....   | 6        |
| Q: Can I choose to disclose or advertise my vaccine status to patients? .....  | 6        |
| Q: Can/should I ask patients for their vaccine status? .....   | 6        |
| Q: Can/should I decline service to a patient who is not vaccinated or who declines to disclose their vaccination status?.....  | 6        |
| Q: Can/should I decline service to a patient who is not wearing a mask? .....  | 7        |
| Q: Do I have to refuse service to someone who answers "yes" to any of the screening questions?.....  | 7        |
| Q: I'm fully vaccinated. Do I still need to isolate/quarantine for 14 days after returning from international/interprovincial travel? .....                              | 7        |
| Q: Can I provide service to a patient who has recently travelled if they are fully vaccinated?.....  | 7        |
| <b>PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT .....</b>  | <b>8</b> |
| Q: Do I still have to screen patients who are fully vaccinated? .....  | 8        |
| Q: Should I require patients wash their hands with soap and water when arriving? .....   | 8        |
| Q: Are we allowed to take the patient's temperature before providing care? .....   | 8        |
| Q: Do I have to refuse service to someone who answers "yes" to any of the screening questions?.....  | 8        |
| Q: Can I refuse services or deny a patient from entering the dispensary or trying on frames if they are showing symptoms or otherwise screen positive for COVID-19?..... | 9        |
| Q: Can we keep the door to the dispensary locked or otherwise limit entry?.....  | 9        |
| Q: I work together with an optometrist. Whose guidelines do I follow, the College of Opticians or the College of Optometrists? .....                                     | 10       |

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Q: Do patients have to sign a COVID-19 transmission release of liability upon visiting the office?.....   | 10        |
| <b>VISITOR LOG .....</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| Q: Am I required to record all visitors to the dispensary? .....  | 10        |
| Q: Who should the visitor log apply to? .....   | 10        |
| Q: What personal details are we allowed to ask from patients and/or other visitors for contact tracing purposes?.....   | 10        |
| Q: Can I refuse entry to someone who refuses to provide their name/contact information? .....   | 11        |
| Q: What are my responsibilities with the contact information that I collect from patients and/or visitors for contact tracing purposes? .....   | 11        |
| Q: Do we have to keep visitor logs for 7 years as we do with patient records?.....  | 12        |
| <b>MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) .....</b>  | <b>12</b> |
| Q: Who is required to wear a mask in the dispensary? .....  | 12        |
| Q: Is it mandatory for patients to wear a mask when visiting the dispensary? .....  | 13        |
| Q: Is it mandatory for opticians to wear a mask in the dispensary? .....  | 13        |
| Q: Can I refuse entry to someone who refuses to comply with a regulation, by-law and/or store policy that requires patients and visitors to wear a mask when entering the dispensary? .....   | 13        |
| Q: Where can opticians access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)? .....  | 14        |
| Q: Am I required to wear a surgical mask for situations where I am working close to the patient? .....  | 14        |
| Q: Can I use a cloth mask instead of a surgical mask?.....  | 14        |
| Q: Would a cloth mask be appropriate when working at a distance from the patient? .....   | 15        |
| Q: When do I need to wear full PPE?.....  | 15        |
| Q: Where can we get plexiglass or plastic shields for counters and/or equipment? .....  | 15        |
| Q: Do I have to change masks between patients?.....   | 16        |
| Q: Are there government grants/funds available to help opticians obtain PPE? Can the College lobby the government for this?.....  | 16        |
| <b>CONTACT LENSES .....</b>   | <b>16</b> |
| Q: Am I allowed to perform initial contact lens fittings? .....   | 16        |
| Q: Can I perform slit lamp checks? .....  | 16        |
| Q: If a current contact lens patient has a new Rx and requires follow up, would that constitute a new fit? .....  | 16        |
| Q: Can we dispense replacement contact lenses to someone who is not an existing patient, but who already wears contact lenses and has details of the contact lenses they currently wear?..... | 17        |
| <b>EYEGASSES AND FRAMES .....</b>   | <b>17</b> |

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Q: Can I dispense eyeglasses if the patient has not tried on the frames? .....   | 17        |
| Q: Should frames be made inaccessible to the patient? .....  | 18        |
| Q: What should I use to disinfect frames? .....  | 18        |
| Q: Can I use UV or other methods not listed above to disinfect frames? .....   | 19        |
| <b>DISPENSARY OWNERS/FACILITY OPERATORS.....</b>   | <b>19</b> |
| Q: Am I required to close my store if I suspect a patient or staff member has been exposed to or is displaying symptoms of COVID-19? .....   | 19        |
| Q: What steps should I take if someone who was recently at the dispensary (e.g. staff member or patient) has identified that they have been infected with COVID-19?.....             | 20        |
| <b>STUDENT REQUIREMENTS.....</b>   | <b>20</b> |
| Q: Will there be any consideration to reduce the amount of contact lens fits that student opticians are required to obtain since it is recommended to not do them at this time. .... | 20        |
| <b>CE CREDITS .....</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| Q: What are the accreditation details for the Return to Practice Webinar held on May 15, 2020? .....   | 21        |
| Q: Since large seminars are cancelled, how will we complete our continuing education hours?.....   | 21        |
| <b>OPENING THE DISPENSARY FOLLOWING PROVINCIAL SHUTDOWN (2020) .....</b>   | <b>21</b> |
| Q: Is it mandatory to get tested for COVID-19 before resuming practice? .....  | 21        |
| Q: Are opticians permitted to offer non-essential services? .....  | 22        |

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

### ONTARIO REOPENING PLANS AND EMERGENCY ORDERS

***Q: How does Step 3 of Reopening Ontario affect opticians?***

**A:** During Step 3 of Reopening Ontario, beginning Friday July 16, 2021, at 12:01 am, there are no restrictions on hours and appointments are not required. **Optical stores must maintain a capacity limit that permits members of the public to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility.**

***Q: Do I have to keep the doors locked?***

**A:** No, there is no requirement for optical stores to lock their doors. Optical stores must limit capacity to a number that will permit members of the public to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility. Some opticians may find keeping an appointment system in place is preferable to keeping customers waiting outside but it is up to the individual store/optician to determine the system that works best for their particular practice environment. Stores are not required to lock their doors provided other strategies are implemented to manage the flow of persons in and out of the store, and to ensure that proper disinfection takes place between patients.

***Q: My dispensary is located in a mall. Am I allowed to remain open?***

**A:** Yes, retail stores that are located within shopping malls are permitted to be open during Step 3, with appropriate capacity limitations.

### COVID-19 VACCINE

***Q: When will opticians be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination?***

**A:** All adults in Ontario are currently eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario> or contact your local public health unit for more information.

***Q: Have opticians been prioritized to receive their second dose of the COVID-19 at a shorter interval?***

**A:** Information about acceleration of second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine can be found here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-getting-your-second-dose>

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: Are opticians required to be vaccinated against COVID-19?***

**A:** While not mandatory, vaccines play a vital role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. As healthcare professionals who often work in close contact with patients, the College encourages opticians to consider getting vaccinated as a way to protect yourselves and your patients. For more information on vaccine availability and safety, please visit the Ontario Government website [here](#).

***Q: I'm fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Do I still need to wear a mask/PPE?***

**A:** Yes. Provincial law continues to require health professionals to wear surgical masks at all times when working within 2 metres of a patient who screens negative for COVID-19, and additional Personal Protective Equipment when working within 2 metres of a patient who screens positive for COVID-19. For more information view the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Operational Requirements: Health Sector Restart](#) publication.

***Q: Can/should I require my employees/interns/students to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in order to work with patients?***

**A:** As an optician, you have a professional responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure patient safety by reducing the risk of COVID-19 being spread in the dispensary environment. Every dispensary is different, and it's up to the individual optician to use their professional judgment to determine what steps or workplace policies will best ensure patient safety, including some or all of the following:

- COVID-19 vaccination for opticians, interns, students and staff
- COVID-19 testing for opticians, interns, students and staff
- Screening patients, opticians, interns, students and staff
- Physical distancing/barriers
- Masks and/or other personal protective equipment
- Capacity limits and/or appointment systems
- Cleaning and disinfection protocols
- Ventilation upgrades

At this time, [Directive #6](#), which was issued by the Chief Medical Officer on August 17, 2021, and which requires certain healthcare service providers to implement workplace vaccination policies, **does not** apply to optical dispensaries. All other protocols relating to Stage 3 of Ontario's reopening plan remain in place, including mask mandates and the requirement to limit capacity to permit physical distancing. Please note that these requirements are subject to change, so please check back regularly for updates.

**\*Note for Employers:** The College's mandate is to ensure that opticians follow the standards of practice with respect to safety and infection control in the practice environment. Any questions relating to an

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

optician's rights or obligations as an employer should be directed to a qualified legal professional.

***Q: Do I have to disclose my vaccine status to my patients?***

**A:** No. Your vaccine status is private and does not need to be disclosed to your patients. You are still encouraged to explain to your patients what steps you have taken to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the practice environment.

***Q: Can I choose to disclose or advertise my vaccine status to patients?***

**A:** Yes. If you wish to disclose your vaccine status to patients you are entitled to do so. It is important to note that you should seek legal advice before disclosing the vaccine status of any other individual (e.g. your employees). It is also important to remember that opticians are responsible for ensuring that any advertisements associated with their practice are accurate and don't include any information that is false or misleading.

***Q: Can/should I ask patients for their vaccine status?***

**A:** The [COVID-19 Patient Screening Guidance Document](#) recommends that healthcare professionals ask for a patient's vaccination status as part of the background information in the screening process. If you do not request information about a patient's vaccination status, or if they decline to answer or advise that they are not vaccinated, you must ask the additional screening questions indicated in the guidance document (Q5 and Q6).

***Q: Can/should I decline service to a patient who is not vaccinated or who declines to disclose their vaccination status?***

**A:** If a patient declines to provide this information, or indicates that they have not been vaccinated, opticians should consider whether there are ways to provide care in a manner that will be safe for both the optician and the patient, including use of personal protective equipment where appropriate. Opticians should also take reasonable steps to accommodate individuals who cannot be vaccinated for qualifying reasons under the *Human Rights Code*.

Dispensary operators who are considering a policy requiring all patients/visitors to be vaccinated should seek advice from a qualified legal professional.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: Can/should I decline service to a patient who is not wearing a mask?***

**A:** See FAQs on mask use by patients [below](#).

***Q: Do I have to refuse service to someone who answers “yes” to any of the screening questions?***

**A:** See FAQs on patient screening [below](#).

***Q: I’m fully vaccinated. Do I still need to isolate/quarantine for 14 days after returning from international/interprovincial travel?***

**A:** It is the responsibility of each individual optician to take steps to ensure a safe practice environment for patients.

Under the College’s Standards and Return to Practice Guidelines, opticians are expected to comply with any federal, provincial or local regulations that are in place regarding quarantine and self-isolation. Opticians must also use professional judgment to determine whether any additional steps should be taken to ensure they are meeting safety and infection control standards in the dispensary environment. The [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Operational Requirements: Health Sector Restart](#) document currently states (as of August 2021) that healthcare workers who have returned from travel in the last 14 days from outside Canada or from a COVID-19 affected area within or outside of Ontario **and/or** have a confirmed, unprotected exposure to a person with COVID-19 must self-monitor for symptoms and may continue to work with specific precautions if they are deemed critical to operations.

Rules relating to quarantines following international travel are set by the Federal Government. Information relating to exemptions can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Please note that rules and regulations are subject to change and it is the optician’s responsibility to verify the latest requirements before returning to work following travel.

***Q: Can I provide service to a patient who has recently travelled if they are fully vaccinated?***

**A:** The current [COVID-19 Patient Screening Guidance Document](#) (effective August 26, 2021) does not require the healthcare provider to ask fully vaccinated patients whether they have travelled outside Canada in the past 14 days.

If a patient has not been fully vaccinated, or if their vaccination status is unknown, they will be considered to “screen positive” if they have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days. Opticians may decide to provide service to a patient that has screened positive provided they follow the rules set out in the

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

[Ministry of Health COVID-19 Operational Requirements: Health Sector Restart](#) document. These guidelines require that the optician use the following precautions for all interactions with and within 2 metres of patients who screen positive: surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves, eye protection, and hand hygiene.

### PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT

***Q: Do I still have to screen patients who are fully vaccinated?***

**A:** Yes. Ministry [guidelines](#) require health professionals to continue screening all patients and visitors based on the latest [COVID-19 Patient Screening Guidance Document](#) regardless of vaccination status.

***Q: Should I require patients wash their hands with soap and water when arriving?***

**A:** Under the [Return to Practice Guidelines](#) you are required to implement hand sanitation at the entrance/exit. This may include a hand washing station or providing alcohol-based hand sanitizer (that has been approved by [Health Canada](#)).

***Q: Are we allowed to take the patient's temperature before providing care?***

**A:** Opticians are required to screen all patients at time of booking and again before they enter the dispensary (Point of Care Risk Assessment), and should follow the latest [COVID-19 Patient Screening Guidance Document](#) published by the Ministry of Health, with necessary adaptations/modifications to the dispensary environment. Opticians may exercise professional judgment to determine if any additional screening methods should be used.

***Q: Do I have to refuse service to someone who answers "yes" to any of the screening questions?***

**A:** No. You are not required to refuse service to someone who answers "yes" to any of the screening questions. Opticians may provide in person services to individuals who screen positive for COVID-19 provided they wear appropriate personal protective equipment, as outlined the Ministry [guidelines](#), and take any other precautions that may be appropriate in the circumstances. For example, it may be prudent to provide services when no other patients are present.

It is up to the individual optician to determine whether they can provide services to the patient in a manner that is safe and that complies with all applicable guidelines.



## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: Can I refuse services or deny a patient from entering the dispensary or trying on frames if they are showing symptoms or otherwise screen positive for COVID-19?***

**A:** Opticians may provide in person services to individuals who screen positive for COVID-19 provided they comply with Ministry guidelines, and take any other precautions that may be appropriate in the circumstances. The Ministry of Health [Health Sector Restart Requirements](#) require health professionals to don full Personal Protective Equipment (surgical mask, isolation gown, gloves, eye protection, hand hygiene) for all interactions with or within 2 metres of a patient who screens positive for COVID-19.

If it is not possible to deliver care in line with these requirements, the optician should make efforts to refer the patient to another health professional who is able to assist.

In most cases, it is recommended that patients who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 be asked to return when they are well. In the event that a patient requires urgent care, service should only be refused after carefully considering whether there is a way to deliver the care in a way that is safe for both yourself and the patient. Consider remote practice when possible.

***Q: Can we keep the door to the dispensary locked or otherwise limit entry?***

**A:** Optical stores are no longer required to operate on an appointment-only basis, but are still required to limit capacity of all rooms to no more than 50% (or as of July 16, 2021, to a number that will permit members of the public to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility). In addition, the Return to Practice Guidelines require opticians to limit the number of people in the dispensary to no more than is necessary in the circumstances. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:

- Keeping the door locked or assigning a staff person or security guard to monitor entrances
- Asking patients to attend unaccompanied, unless they are a minor or otherwise require assistance
- Placing signs in the dispensary that encourage physical distancing and provide instructions for doing so
- Spacing waiting room areas/chairs to ensure minimum 2 metre distance between patients or asking people to wait outside or in their vehicles
- Setting up visual cues such as floor markers that are at least 2 metres apart or arrows to indicate a directional flow through the facility

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: I work together with an optometrist. Whose guidelines do I follow, the College of Opticians or the College of Optometrists?***

**A:** As an optician you are required to comply with the Standards and Guidelines set by the College of Opticians. If you are working under the direction and/or delegation of an optometrist, you should ensure that you are also complying with your professional obligations as an optician.

***Q: Do patients have to sign a COVID-19 transmission release of liability upon visiting the office?***

**A:** Opticians must use professional judgment to decide what measures are necessary to protect themselves, their patients and their staff in the circumstances. Opticians who are employers have additional obligations under occupational health and safety legislation, and should seek legal advice on their responsibilities.

### VISITOR LOG

***Q: Am I required to record all visitors to the dispensary?***

**A:** No, it is recommended, but not required, that you keep a log of all visitors to the dispensary in order to facilitate contact tracing in the event that someone in the practice environment (optician, staff or patient) later tests positive for COVID-19.

***Q: Who should the visitor log apply to?***

**A:** If you decide to maintain a visitor log, it should include everyone who enters the practice environment (patients and non-patients), including the date and time of entry.

***Q: What personal details are we allowed to ask from patients and/or other visitors for contact tracing purposes?***

**A:** You should ask for the individual's name and a way to contact them (e.g. telephone number or email address).

In all cases, consent is required to collect, use or disclose personal information (except in limited circumstances, like an emergency or where the law otherwise permits this).

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: Can I refuse entry to someone who refuses to provide their name/contact information?***

**A:** As an optician, you have a professional responsibility to minimize risk to your patients and engage in appropriate infection control mechanisms. Maintaining a visitor log is one way to enhance this process, in conjunction with other measures such as limiting entry to the practice environment and thorough cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

The [Standards of Practice](#) already require opticians to record patient contact information in the patient file. It is up to the individual optician to determine whether to require all others who enter the practice environment to provide their name and contact information for contact tracing purposes. In all cases, consent is required to collect, use or disclose personal information (except in limited circumstances, like an emergency or where the law otherwise permits this).

If someone is unwilling to provide their personal information, the optician may wish to contact the [Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario](#) and/or the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#) for guidance on their obligations under privacy legislation. Opticians should also consider whether the requested service can be provided in a way that does not require the individual to enter the practice environment (e.g. curbside pickup).

***Q: What are my responsibilities with the contact information that I collect from patients and/or visitors for contact tracing purposes?***

Opticians have responsibilities under privacy legislation to protect personal information that is collected from patients and others in the practice environment. The *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)* is a federal law that addresses the collection, use and disclosure of personal information in relation to commercial activities that fall outside of healthcare. Examples of personal information may include a person's name and personal contact information.

Under *PIPEDA*, someone engaging in commercial activities must do the following when collecting, using or disclosing personal information:

- Identify the purpose for which the personal information will be used at the time that you collect it, and only collect the minimum amount of information necessary to achieve that purpose
- Obtain the person's consent to collect, use or disclose their personal information (except in limited circumstances, like an emergency or where the law otherwise permits this)
- Only use, disclose or retain the information in order to achieve the identified purpose
- Protect the information with appropriate safeguards against loss, theft, unauthorized access, disclosure, copying, use or modification
- Provide access to the person to whom the information relates, if they request it, and permit them to correct it if necessary

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

- Make the organization’s privacy policies readily available
- Have a procedure in place to address any complaints relating to personal information, and investigate all complaints

Opticians may wish to contact the [Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario](#) and/or the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#) for further guidance.

**Q: Do we have to keep visitor logs for 7 years as we do with patient records?**

**A:** Under the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*, personal information relating to commercial activities should only be retained as long as is required to carry out the purpose that the information was collected for.

Opticians may wish to contact the [Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario](#) and/or the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#) for further guidance.

### MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

**Q: Who is required to wear a mask in the dispensary?**

**A:** The following guidelines apply to mask use by individuals in the dispensary setting:

|   | Is mask required?           | Type of Personal Protective Equipment/Protocols   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Patients or Visitors  | Required                    | Non-medical (cloth) or face covering  |
| Opticians, working <b>within 2 metres</b> of a patient who screens <b>negative</b> for COVID-19 | Required                    | Surgical mask and hand hygiene  |
| Opticians, working at <b>more than 2 metres</b> from the patient                                | Recommended<br><br>Required | Surgical mask and hand hygiene<br><br>Non-medical mask or other face covering, in accordance with any other municipal, regional, provincial or federal government or authorities regarding the use of face masks or coverings in indoor spaces or workplaces. |
| Opticians, working <b>within 2 metres</b> of a patient who screens <b>positive</b> for COVID-19 | Required                    | Surgical mask, isolation gown, gloves, eye protection, and hand hygiene   |
| Staff, where physical distance cannot be maintained   | Recommended<br><br>Required | Surgical mask and hand hygiene<br><br>Non-medical mask or other face covering, in   |

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | accordance with any other municipal, regional, provincial or federal government or authorities regarding the use of face masks or coverings in indoor spaces or workplaces. |
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For more information, see the Ministry of Health [Operational Requirements](#) guidelines.

***Q: Is it mandatory for patients to wear a mask when visiting the dispensary?***

**A:** Yes. Under the Ministry of Health [Operational Requirements](#) guidelines, health professionals are required to post signage at the entrance to the office/clinic and at reception areas requiring all patients and any visitors to wear a face covering/non-medical mask (if available and tolerated) and perform hand hygiene prior to reporting to reception.

***Q: Is it mandatory for opticians to wear a mask in the dispensary?***

**A:** All health care practitioners are required under the Ministry of Health [Operational Requirements](#) guidelines to wear a medical (surgical) mask for all interactions with and within 2 metres of a patient. In addition the Ontario Government has passed laws regarding the use of masks in indoor public spaces. Opticians must also follow any other laws or by-laws regarding the wearing of face masks (whether medical or non-medical) in indoor spaces, where such laws or by-laws are in place. These rules may differ from region to region, and it is the responsibility of the optician to be familiar with any rules that apply to their place(s) of practice.

***Q: Can I refuse entry to someone who refuses to comply with a regulation, by-law and/or store policy that requires patients and visitors to wear a mask when entering the dispensary?***

**A:** Current provincial regulations require all patients and visitors to dispensaries to wear a mask or face covering if available and tolerated. Dispensary operators may establish policies that require patients and/or visitors to wear masks when on the premises, provided they do not conflict with any federal, provincial, regional or municipal laws or by-laws (where such laws/by-laws exist).

In the event that a patient or visitor indicates that they are unable to wear a mask (e.g. because of a medical condition), service should only be refused after making reasonable efforts to accommodate them, including considering whether there is a way offer service in a manner that is safe for both the optician and the patient. It is up to the optician to use their judgment to determine whether they can provide the service safely. There are a number of questions and considerations that the optician may take into account, including:

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

- Whether there are alternative ways that the service can be provided that do not require in-person or close contact (e.g. remote practice)
- If the service cannot be provided remotely or without close contact, the optician should consider whether the patient has any risk factors for COVID-19. Remember that per the Return to Practice Guidelines, all patients must be screened before in-person service is provided.
- Whether the optician has access to appropriate PPE.
- Whether steps can be taken to limit exposure to other patients and/or staff members. If a patient is unable to wear a mask, the optician should ensure that the individuals in the dispensary are limited to no more than is necessary to provide the service.
- Whether it will be possible to adhere to the standard and guidelines on proper cleaning and disinfection between patients.

Regardless of how services are delivered, opticians must continue to adhere to all relevant health and safety guidelines including:

- [Standards of Practice](#)
- [Return to Work Guidelines](#)
- [COVID-19 Operational Requirements-Health Sector Restart Document](#)

***Q: Where can opticians access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?***

**A:** The Ontario Government has established a [website](#) and a [directory](#) to connect businesses with PPE suppliers.

***Q: Am I required to wear a surgical mask for situations where I am working close to the patient?***

**A:** Yes. Under the Ministry of Health's [Health Sector Restart Requirements](#), you are required to wear a surgical/procedure mask for all interactions with an within 2 metres of patients who screen negative for COVID-19. You must also perform hand hygiene before and after contact with the patient and the patient environment and after the removal of PPE. Use of eye protection (goggles or face shield) should also be considered.

***Q: Can I use a cloth mask instead of a surgical mask?***

**A:** A cloth mask is not a suitable alternative for a surgical mask. Where guidelines require the use of a surgical mask, a cloth mask is not appropriate.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: Would a cloth mask be appropriate when working at a distance from the patient?***

**A:** It is up to the optician to use professional judgment to determine whether to wear a non-surgical mask or face covering when working at a distance from the patient, having regard to the following considerations:

- Non-medical masks are not a substitute for surgical masks, which must be worn when interacting with or within 2 metres of a patient.
- Non-medical masks will not prevent the wearer from contracting COVID-19. Health officials have agreed, however, that the use of a non-medical mask may reduce the risk of respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces.
- Non-medical masks must be cleaned regularly (typically after each use) to prevent cross-contamination.

***Q: When do I need to wear full PPE?***

**A:** Under the Ministry of Health's [Health Sector Restart Requirements](#), you are required to use the following PPE for all interactions with and within 2 metres of a patient who screens positive for COVID-19:

- Surgical/procedure mask
- Isolation gown
- Gloves
- Eye protection (goggles or face shield)
- Perform hand hygiene before and after contact with the patient and the patient environment and after the removal of PPE

The College recommends that opticians defer non-urgent vision care until the patient is well.

***Q: Where can we get plexiglass or plastic shields for counters and/or equipment?***

**A:** The Ontario Government has established a [website](#) and a [directory](#) to connect businesses with PPE suppliers.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

***Q: Do I have to change masks between patients?***

**A:** Changing masks in between patients is optimal, but where supplies are limited, opticians should consult contingency strategies recommended by public health authorities, such as the [CDC](#) or [WHO](#).

***Q: Are there government grants/funds available to help opticians obtain PPE? Can the College lobby the government for this?***

**A:** Under the Ministry of Health's [Health Sector Restart Requirements](#), it is the responsibility of employers and health care providers to ensure that there is adequate PPE for staff members in the health setting. At present, there is no indication that funding or grants will be made available to health care providers to obtain PPE.

### CONTACT LENSES

***Q: Am I allowed to perform initial contact lens fittings?***

**A:** Yes, however it is important to remember that research continues to be conducted on the risk of transmitting COVID-19 via tear film and/or direct contact with the ocular membrane. The College continues to recommend that opticians limit the performance of initial contact lens fittings at this time. Opticians who choose to perform initial contact lens fittings must ensure that they take steps to mitigate the potential risk by adhering to requirements set out in the Return to Practice Guidelines with respect to initial contact lens fittings. Where the risk level cannot be appropriately mitigated, the optician should refer the patient to another healthcare provider.

***Q: Can I perform slit lamp checks?***

**A:** It is recommended that opticians exercise caution when performing slit lamp checks on a patient, and use appropriate PPE and/or physical barriers, including surgical mask, face shield and/or plexiglass shield.

***Q: If a current contact lens patient has a new Rx and requires follow up, would that constitute a new fit?***

**A:** Opticians can use professional judgment to provide follow up care to established contact lens patients, but it is recommended that any service that requires direct contact between the optician and the patient's eye or eyelid be deferred or delayed at this time. If urgent care is required, the optician must take all necessary precautions, including screening practices, hand hygiene and PPE where



## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

appropriate.

***Q: Can we dispense replacement contact lenses to someone who is not an existing patient, but who already wears contact lenses and has details of the contact lenses they currently wear?***

**A:** Under existing Practice Guidelines, an optician may consider someone to be an “established contact lens patient” for the purposes of dispensing replacement contact lenses where that person has previously been dispensed contact lenses by another person authorized to dispense in Ontario, provided they have access to the relevant information from the patient file.

If a patient is seeking replacement contact lenses that is neither an existing patient nor one where the patient health record is available, the optician should consider the following factors before determining whether it is appropriate to dispense replacement contact lenses to the patient without conducting a new fitting:

- The patient’s health history
- The type of lens required (e.g. soft or rigid)

Where no patient file is available, the optician should take all pertinent health history and might consider working with parameters supplied by the patient from their existing contact lenses to dispense a minimum supply of contact lenses to assist the patient during this period. Where the optician is of the view that they do not have sufficient information to dispense appropriate lenses, they should decline to do so.

### EYEGASSES AND FRAMES

***Q: Can I dispense eyeglasses if the patient has not tried on the frames?***

**A:** The [Standards of Practice](#) and [Return to Practice Guidelines](#) empower opticians to use professional judgment to engage in remote practice and to decide whether it is appropriate to deliver eyeglasses prior to fitting and adapting them to the patient. It is important to consider factors such as:

- The patient’s age and health
- Degree of anisometropia
- The prescription details and/or the type of lens being dispensed
- Whether you have measurements on file, and whether those measurements were taken in person or remotely
- Any other reason where it is in the patient’s interest to require an in person meeting

The [Return to Practice Guidelines](#) and the Ministry of Health’s [Health Sector Restart Requirements](#) both

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

emphasize the need to prioritize remote care at this time. Opticians should consider ways of minimizing the need for close physical contact with patients. If you decide that it is appropriate to use remote delivery to dispense eyeglasses prior to fitting/adapting, or where the patient has not tried on the frames, it is important to explain to the patient how this might impact the eyewear's performance, and document this discussion in the patient file.

***Q: Should frames be made inaccessible to the patient?***

**A:** Opticians must take steps to reduce the likelihood that frames or other retail products will be touched or handled by patients such as placing frames and other retail items in display cases or behind barriers, or by posting signs asking individuals to request assistance before handling items. A system should be in place to ensure that any frames that are handled by a patient, optician or staff person is disinfected after each handling.

***Q: What should I use to disinfect frames?***

The College does not have any recommendations on specific disinfectants.

Public Health recommends consulting with your frame or equipment manufacturer for disinfecting regimes that are effective yet compatible with their products.

Public Health speaks to different levels of classification of Medical Devices and the Required Level of Cleaning.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

This chart is an excerpt from [Best Practices for Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization of Medical Equipment/Devices](#). It outlines Spaulding Classification which is the instrument classification system used for reprocessing decisions. For more information, please visit [www.publichealthontario.ca](http://www.publichealthontario.ca) or email [ipac@oahpp.ca](mailto:ipac@oahpp.ca).

| Classification                           | Definition  | Level of Processing/<br>Reprocessing   | Examples  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>CRITICAL<br/>Equipment/Device</b>     | Equipment/device that enters sterile tissues, including the vascular system   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaning followed by Sterilization</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surgical instruments</li> <li>Implants</li> <li>Biopsy instruments</li> <li>Foot care equipment</li> <li>Eye and dental equipment</li> </ul> |
| <b>SEMICRITICAL<br/>Equipment/Device</b> | Equipment/device that comes in contact with non-intact skin or mucous membranes but does not penetrate them                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaning followed by High- Level Disinfection (as a minimum)</li> <li>Sterilization is preferred</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respiratory therapy equipment</li> <li>Anaesthesia equipment</li> <li>Tonometer</li> </ul>   |
| <b>NONCRITICAL<br/>Equipment/Device</b>  | Equipment/device that touches only intact skin and not mucous membranes, or does not directly touch the client/patient/resident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaning followed by Low- Level Disinfection (in some cases, cleaning alone is acceptable)</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ECG machines</li> <li>Oximeters</li> <li>Bedpans, urinals, commodes</li> </ul>   |

### References

Spaulding E. The role of chemical disinfection in the prevention of nosocomial infections. In: Proceedings of the International Conference on Nosocomial Infections, 1970. Chicago, IL: American Hospital Association; 1971. p. 247-54.



Consider what level of contact the frame or other optical equipment has made with the patient and follow the appropriate level of reprocessing required.

**Q: Can I use UV or other methods not listed above to disinfect frames?**

**A:** Public Health has identified UV as **not** effective for contaminants on hard surfaces.

### DISPENSARY OWNERS/FACILITY OPERATORS

**Q: Am I required to close my store if I suspect a patient or staff member has been exposed to or is displaying symptoms of COVID-19?**

**A:** If you operate a dispensary and suspect (but have not confirmed) that someone in the dispensary has been exposed to COVID-19, it is important to immediately assess the situation and take steps to reasonably minimize the potential risks to staff and patients. These steps may or may not include closing the store, depending on the circumstances.

At a minimum, it will be important to closely monitor the situation and take steps to ensure that anyone who screens positive for possible COVID-19 infection (including those awaiting test results) does not

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

attend at the dispensary again until they have self-isolated in accordance with public health guidelines. Opticians should also disinfect any surfaces, equipment or tools that the individual may have come in contact with. Opticians may also wish to consider additional precautions, such as advising all individuals (staff and/or patients) who came in contact with the individual in question to monitor themselves for symptoms.

It is important to note that opticians who employ other individuals may have additional obligations under Employment Standards and Occupational Health and Safety Legislation. Employers may wish to obtain legal advice regarding these obligations.

***Q: What steps should I take if someone who was recently at the dispensary (e.g. staff member or patient) has identified that they have been infected with COVID-19?***

**A:** If you operate a dispensary and become aware that someone who recently visited the dispensary (e.g. staff member or patient) has a confirmed COVID-19 infection, it is important to immediately assess the situation and take steps to reasonably minimize the potential risks to staff and patients. These steps may or may not include closing the store, depending on the circumstances.

At a minimum, it will be important to assess the following:

- Whether any staff members may have been exposed to COVID-19 and should therefore self-isolate before returning to the workplace (see the Return to Practice Guidelines on self-isolating for more information)
- Whether any patients or visitors may have been exposed to COVID-19 and should therefore be contacted

In addition, the optician should disinfect any surfaces, equipment or tools that the individual may have come in contact with.

It is important to note that opticians who employ other individuals may have additional obligations under Employment Standards and Occupational Health and Safety Legislation. Employers may wish to obtain legal advice regarding these obligations.

### STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

***Q: Will there be any consideration to reduce the amount of contact lens fits that student opticians are required to obtain since it is recommended to not do them at this time.***

**A:** No. Many of the educational and registration requirements necessary to become a Registered Optician, including the requirements to complete an accredited educational program, the national

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

examinations, and 1000 hours of dispensing experience, are non-exemptible requirements in the regulation and cannot be waived. This regulation ensures that all registered opticians meet the standards for safe and competent care to the public. Currently, there is no shortage of opticians during the pandemic, so at this time, the COO is not considering the introduction of a temporary or time limited registration certificate to fast track new registrations.

### CE CREDITS

***Q: What are the accreditation details for the Return to Practice Webinar held on May 15, 2020?***

**A:** Accreditation number #3819, 1.5 PG

***Q: Since large seminars are cancelled, how will we complete our continuing education hours?***

**A:** Many providers are offering webinars and distance education modules.

For a [list of providers](#) please see our website.

### OPENING THE DISPENSARY FOLLOWING PROVINCIAL SHUTDOWN (2020)

***Q: Is it mandatory to get tested for COVID-19 before resuming practice?***

**A:** No, under current practice directives and guidelines (as of June 2, 2020), there is no requirement for opticians to undergo testing for COVID-19 prior to returning to practice.

Under [Ministry of Health guidelines](#), health care workers that are returning to work are advised to follow “**isolation and clearance with a non-test based approach**” unless they required hospitalization during the course of their illness, in which case a test based approach is preferred. The guidelines note that some health care workers may be directed by their employers to undergo testing before returning to work.

All opticians, regardless of whether they undergo testing, must follow the Return to Practice Guidelines and self-isolate for at least 14 days if they screen positive for COVID-19, which typically means where some or any of the following conditions are met:

- They test positive for COVID-19 or are awaiting test results
- They experience symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild (including fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, sore throat or runny nose)

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 13, 2021

- They have been in close contact (without personal protective equipment or other precautions) with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19
- They recently travelled outside Canada

More information about current screening protocols can be found on the Ministry of Health website [here](#).

***Q: Are opticians permitted to offer non-essential services?***

**A:** [Directive 2](#), which was issued in an updated form on May 26, 2020, permitted regulated health professionals to gradually resume full practice in accordance with the College's [Return to Practice Guidelines](#) and the Ministry of Health's [Health Sector Restart Requirements](#).

Opticians are no longer restricted to providing only essential and urgent care and may offer all professional opticianry services from their practice location provided they do so in accordance with these guidelines.