

COVID-19 Update #44

February 15, 2022 – 1:30 pm

Dear Registrant,

The Ontario Government has [announced](#) that effective Thursday, February 17, 2022, at 12:01 a.m., retail stores, including optical dispensaries, will no longer be subject to a 50% capacity limit. Instead, the following rule will apply to retail stores:

- Capacity must be limited to the number of people who can maintain **two metres physical distance**.

All other public health measures remain in place until further notice. These measures include:

- Masks for all persons in the dispensary
- Screening of all patients and visitors in accordance with [Ministry of Health requirements](#)
- Regular cleaning and disinfection in accordance with the [Return to Practice Guidelines](#)

Please visit the COO's [COVID-19 FAQ page](#) or contact practiceadvice@collegeofopticians.ca for more information. We know many of you have questions and we will do our best to respond to them as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we've provided excerpts from the FAQ page to answer some of the most common questions that we receive:

Q: Do I still have to screen all patients/visitors, including individuals 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: 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 within 2 metres of a patient who screens negative for COVID-19 | Required | Surgical mask and hand hygiene |
| Opticians, working at more than 2 metres from the patient | Recommended Required | Surgical mask and hand hygiene 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 within 2 metres of a patient who screens positive for COVID-19 | Required | Fit-tested, seal checked N95 respirator, isolation gown, gloves, eye protection, and hand hygiene |
| Staff, where physical distance cannot be maintained | Recommended | Surgical mask and hand hygiene |
| | Required | 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. |

For more information, see the Ministry of Health [Operational Requirements](#) guidelines and [Directive #1](#) issued by the Chief Medical Officer.

Q: Do I have to keep the doors locked/create barriers?

A: No, there is no requirement for optical stores to lock their doors or create physical barriers at the dispensary entrance. 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: Am I allowed to perform initial contact lens fittings?

A: The College is not restricting opticians from performing contact lens fittings. Opticians, however, 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.

Kind regards,

Fazal and the COO Team