



Recommended Frequency of the Comprehensive Eye Examination

Background

Reviewed July 2024

The need for regular comprehensive eye examinations has been recognized for many years. Vision and ocular health conditions are not always accompanied by recognizable symptoms. There is often an increased risk to the patient if treatment is not initiated in a timely manner. Waiting for the occurrence of obvious symptoms to initiate an eye examination exposes the patient to significant unnecessary risk.

A comprehensive eye examination is the best tool for the early detection of eye disease and several systemic diseases. It is based on the premise that structural change in the eye (often at the microscopic level) manifests itself well before any functional changes and vision loss occur. If performed according to recommended frequency guidelines, including diagnostic and imaging tools, more than 90% of vision loss in Canada can be detected early and prevented from progressing to functional vision impairment.

Many factors influence the frequency of the comprehensive eye examination. Only the examining clinician, upon the analysis of all factors, including personal medical and family history, can determine when a particular patient should return for another comprehensive examination or a partial one.

Policy Position

The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends the following intervals between comprehensive eye exams for healthy individuals. The frequency of examinations for high-risk and symptomatic patients can only be determined by the treating clinician:



Age Group	Comprehensive eye exam frequency for low-risk, asymptomatic individuals.
Infants and Toddlers (Birth to 24 months)	Infants and toddlers should undergo their first eye examination between the ages of six and nine months
Preschool Children (Two to five years)	At least one eye examination between the ages of two and five years
School Age Children (Six to 19 years)	Annually
Adults (20 to 64 years)	Every two years
Adults (65 years or older)	Annually or as recommended ⁱ

ⁱ Recommended frequency of eye exams may vary on the advice of your optometrist based on your specific eye and general health risk factors.

Reviewed July 2024