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**COUNCIL FOR HEALTHY EYES CANADA (CHEC)**

# Covid-19 Toolkit for Optometrists

**PRACTICING SAFE URGENT CARE**



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Council for Healthy Eyes Canada (CHEC) Optometrist Toolkit resources are developed and made available through the collaborative partnerships between the vision industry and eye care professionals

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## Introduction

To help reduce the spread of Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19 or SARS-COV-2) and support social distancing, many Optometrists have shuttered offices and are shifting to remote/virtual services to continue caring for patients during the pandemic. This has changed how you care for patients during the lockdown, and as restrictions are lifted will continue to impact how you operate on daily basis to ensure the safety of patients and all Canadians.

This document contains practical information for Canadian Optometrists related to the Covid-19 pandemic and virtual resources to consider for your practice. We have curated information from various sources including Federation of Optometric Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FORAC), Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) and various provincial associations.

As we all continue to navigate this ever-changing situation, we hope you find this toolkit and other resources developed by the Council for Healthy Eyes Canada (CHEC) helpful. Our goal to provide you with useful resources is made possible through the collaborations and relationships we've developed and continue to expand.

CHEC is grateful for the support from industry partners like Alcon, Essilor, Johnson and Johnson, Nikon and Shamir.

The Council for Healthy Eyes Canada (CHEC) very much appreciates ongoing leadership from our industry partners in helping to found the highly successful ThinkAboutYourEyes.ca (TAYE) integrated marketing, communications and data collection campaign. We also would like to thank Canadian eye care professionals such as Optometrists at this very challenging time.

The Alcon logo consists of the word "Alcon" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

## About us

Organized as a collaboration between eye care professionals and industry, CHEC is a registered not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to improving eye health for Canadians through awareness and education initiatives. Through strategic partnerships and the guidance of our representative Board, we aim to increase awareness and eye care intentions of Canadians from coast to coast, subsequently leading to an uplift in the number of eye exams and vision treatments across the country.

ThinkAboutYourEyes.ca (TAYE) is a bilingual (English and French) integrated marketing, communications and data collection campaign organized annually by CHEC, which has increased foot traffic to Canadian Optometrists by well-over five percent (5%) each year and has successfully reached millions of Canadians since its launch in 2018. TAYE is a collaborative effort that is designed to educate the public about the benefits of vision health and promote the importance of annual comprehensive eye exams.

To learn more, visit:

<https://www.thinkaboutyoureyes.ca/>

<http://councilforhealthyeyes.ca/>

### Disclaimer

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only. The contents of this document are provided in good faith; however, we make no representation of warranty of any kind, express or implied, regarding the accuracy, adequacy, validity, reliability, availability or completeness of any information in this document. Under no circumstances shall CHEC be held legally liable.

## Practicing safe urgent care

To limit contact between patients and staff in facilities, it's best to only see patients for urgent issues. If your facilities are still open, ensure that your patients are screened for COVID-19 in advance.

Although there is no precise definition of what constitutes urgent care, the [Ontario College of Optometry](#) defines it as "any issue that could be vision-threatening, based on symptoms, conditions, patient history, or injury."

Use your best clinical judgement when deciding if and how to pursue potential urgent cases. Staff and patient safety should be your primary concern. In cases where you are not able to serve urgent care patients, they should be referred to another optometrist, ophthalmologist or the nearest emergency room as appropriate.

### Screening for Covid-19

If your facility is open to the public, it's important to check staff for symptoms every day.

#### Screening protocol

To minimize social contact with patients, use a telephone or video triage system to determine whether a patient needs to be seen in person.

If possible, check the temperature of onsite visitors using a contactless thermometer. Also, ask staff and patients to confirm they have no new coughing, shortness of breath or conjunctivitis which can be symptoms of Covid-19.

#### Referral protocol

For patients who potentially have Covid-19, call the practitioner or hospital where the patient is being referred so the health care team can be given notice of the urgency of the eye health issue and the respiratory infection.

#### Onsite protocol

Always consider ways to limit onsite individuals. See patients by appointment only, and only those who have urgent issues. Do not see patients for routine eye exams.

Additionally, take extra precautions:

- **Wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds** upon arrival, before/after each patient, before/after eating and before/after using any shared facilities or devices.

- **Use >70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer** regularly if you have access to it and clean all equipment with best available disinfectant (e.g. diluted bleach or alcohol solution)
- **Minimize sharing equipment** and disinfect phones or computers in-between uses.
- **Maintain social distancing** amongst staff/patients. Limit number of patients in waiting room, space out chairs and consider asking patients to wait outside facility until it's their turn.
- **Masks should be worn** by all staff within two meters of patients and any patients with signs of respiratory infection.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Only provide in-person urgent care if you have access to PPE. If you're receiving urgent care patients, it's imperative that proper [donning and doffing procedures](#) are followed to keep everyone safe.

The BC Centre for Disease Control has developed two handy guides that can be printed and posted as office reminders for staff who are in direct contact with patients:

- [Five steps to put on PPE](#); and,
- [Nine steps to take off PPE](#).

#### PPE conservation

Due to the shortage of PPE worldwide, essential workers are being encouraged to prolong use of protective masks, gowns and eyewear when appropriate. If you exercise this approach, avoid touching, removing and resituating PPE to prevent cross-contamination.

As a best practice, prolonged wear of PPE should not exceed four hours and prolonged use of gloves is never recommended, replace them regularly and wash hands frequently.

#### PPE donations

If you have access to personal protective equipment and are not seeing patients in person, consider donating your equipment to a local hospital.