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COUNCIL FOR HEALTHY EYES CANADA (CHEC)

Covid-19 Toolkit for Optometrists

PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST



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/>

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Putting patients first

How businesses respond during this pandemic can influence how they are remembered down the road. Delivering great customer experiences has become infinitely more complex and important during this time, as circumstances change rapidly and emotions run high. The best thing you can do is take a human-centric approach and focus on how you can help your patients and others.

During the pandemic considerations

This is new territory for everyone, and nobody has all the answers. Listen to your patients and what they feel comfortable with to help you continue to provide exceptional care. Here are some ways you can be proactive to let patients know you have their best interests in mind.

Best practices

- **Share information.** Clearly communicate service offerings, hours of operation, contact info and onsite protocol to your patients. Post signage in your window(s) or at entrances, update online listings and voicemail. Consider email communication if you have contact info and consent.
- **Reach out.** Block time each day to call and check in on your most vulnerable patients. This old-school approach to patient care goes a long way.
- **Practice empathy.** Be mindful of patient anxiety and assure them they are in good hands. Let them know how to reach out if they have questions or concerns.

Post-pandemic considerations

When we open back up for business, the world we will return to is still unknown and may be permanently impacted by the realities brought to light during the pandemic. We expect that there will be an uptick in awareness around personal health that will include eye health.

As social distancing restrictions are lifted, patients may be apprehensive about being in public spaces. You will need to pay extra attention to making patients feel comfortable in your practice. When your practice reopens to in-person examinations, continue to follow vigilant cleaning rituals and social distancing recommendations as set out by provincial and federal authorities.

Dealing with upset customers

Especially during emotionally turbulent times, when staff are under more pressure than ever, it can be difficult to remain calm while dealing with an unforeseen issue. If you haven't already done so, consider basic training and escalation protocol for dealing with angry, upset or scared patients.

Key considerations

1. **Listen first.** Sometimes patients just need to feel heard and understood.
2. **Channel empathy.** Try to understand their perspective and reasons behind the feelings.
3. **Avoid arguing.** Let them voice their concerns and remind them you're there to help.
4. **Set boundaries.** If things escalate to a point where you feel unsafe, politely end the conversation.