

OPTOMETRISTS: Primary eye care experts

Optometrists play a key role in Canadians' eye health and vision care. As primary eye care specialists, optometrists are the first eye health professionals patients see and are uniquely well-positioned to deliver cost-effective early detection, prevention and treatment of eye diseases and disorders.

Their scope of practice includes patient counselling, prescribing medications, providing vision therapy and low vision rehabilitation, as well as prescribing and fitting eye glasses and contact lenses.

Optometrists also carry out comprehensive eye exams. This exam looks at the entire eye and visual system and can detect eye diseases and disorders such as glaucoma and cataracts, as well as other systemic health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure. A comprehensive eye examination is an important first step in determining a person's current level of vision, determining the cause of any sight loss, and, when applicable, establishing an optimal treatment plan.



ROLE in prevention

- Vision loss is the most feared disability among Canadians¹, and Canadians also rank maintaining vision health and preventing vision loss among their top three health priorities.²
- Poor eye health is linked to limited school performance in children; increased absenteeism and unemployment in adults; and high prevalence of falls, depression, and social isolation in seniors.^{3, 4}
- 75% of vision loss is avoidable, preventable, or treatable.⁵
- Most eye problems are asymptomatic and thus are silent.⁶ Early detection is crucial.
- Optometrists can help to identify underlying health conditions that are often first detected through an eye exam, providing referrals to medical specialists and other health care professionals as applicable.



SWIFT ACTION REQUIRED to optimize optometry's role in primary eye care

- Promote a patient-centered, sustainable system that optimizes optometrists' skills, knowledge and scope of practice.
- Educate the public by promoting the value of comprehensive eye exams to prevent vision loss and promote eye health through a public awareness campaign.

REFERENCES >

