



Considerations for Return to Patient Care

The American Academy of Optometry provides a list of considerations for optometrists returning to patient care. They are based on evidence in the literature and guidelines from government agencies, but optometrists should implement based on local, regional, and state rules and guidelines, as well as personal comfort. They will be updated as needed.

DOCTOR & STAFF:

- Minimize the number of staff in the office.
What work functions can be performed at home?
- Avoid sharing workstations as much as possible – consider plastic dividers or more space between workstations.
- Provide training on infection control.
- Check temperature before coming to work.
- Immediately report symptoms such as cough, upper respiratory problems, etc.
- Wear PPE at all times:
 - ___ Nitrile gloves
 - ___ Mask
 - ___ Safety goggles or face shield
 - ___ Water-proof gown or two water-resistant gowns and/or plastic apron (if examining COVID-19 patients)
 - ___ Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use alcohol gel, then put on gloves and dispose of when done
- Ensure staff can be rapidly tested for COVID-19 if necessary.
- When returning home, remove shoes and clothing before entering the house and shower immediately.
- Consider scrubs and a laundry service at work.
- Use portals for co-pays to decrease exposure at check-out.
- If you have difficulty obtaining PPE, call your local health department or state association.

WAITING ROOM & RECEPTION AREAS:

- Consider plexiglass divider to separate reception from patients.
- Block/remove chairs in waiting room that are not at least 6 feet apart.
- Frequently clean door handles, clipboards, pens, chairs, etc.
- Consistently clean all computers, keyboards, phones.
- Remove as much as possible from the waiting area and reception (magazines, advertisements, etc.).

EXAMINATION:

- Wash hands and put on new gloves prior to each examination.
- Always wear other PPE.
- Take patient directly to examination room.
- Disinfect occluder after each use.
- Hold stereopsis and color test book for patient (don't let patient touch it).
- Use a protective shield on the slit lamp.
- Avoid conversation when close to patient (during slit lamp examination or funduscopy).
- Use single-use protective coverings, if possible.
- Non-contact tonometry may micro-aerosolize the virus.
- Disinfect tonometer prism according to manufacturer's guidelines.
- Use binocular indirect or fundus photography to maximize distance during fundus examination.
- Clean/disinfect equipment before and after each use, including chair and anything touched during examination.
- Minimize specialty tests to critical needs (visual fields, optical coherence tomography, corneal topography, etc.).
- Use touchless paper towel dispensers.

FRAME/CONTACT LENS

SELECT & DISPENSE:

- Consider frame dispenses by appointment only.
- Limit the number of people in frame select area.
- Limit the number of frames a patient can try on.
- Disinfect all frames after contact.
- Use trial bottles of solution (not large bottles) and give to patient when done.
- If possible, go to car to dispense glasses.
- Mail contact lenses to patients.
- Consider protective shield on pupilometer or using ruler to maximize distance.



PRIOR TO APPOINTMENT:

- How necessary is the appointment?
- Can this be a telehealth appointment instead?
- Are prescription refills without an appointment a consideration?
- Is patient part of a vulnerable population (older, immune-compromised or -suppressed, respiratory problems, etc.)?
- If yes, consider separate hours.
- Screen patients by phone and ask these triage questions to determine urgency of appointment:
 - ___ Have you tested positive for COVID-19 or been exposed to someone who has?
 - ___ Have you had a fever in the past 3 days?
 - ___ Have you had a cough or shortness of breath in the past 3 days?
 - ___ Have you had chest pain in the past 3 days?
 - ___ Have you recently traveled to high impact areas such as New York, Detroit, etc.?
 - ___ Have you experience a change in taste or smell?
- Explain how the appointment will differ from previous examinations:
 - ___ Instruct patient to wear mask to their appointment.
 - ___ Patient should reschedule if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19.
 - ___ No one may accompany patient unless it is absolutely necessary.
 - ___ Have patient complete history online or fillable/printable PDF prior to their appointment.
 - ___ Instruct patient they should wait in car until they receive call or text.

PATIENT APPOINTMENT ARRIVAL:

- Call/text patient when ready for appointment.
- Document patient's arrival and departure times.
- Obtain patient contact information in case contact tracing is needed.
- Take temperature of patient.
- Ask the following screening questions:
 - ___ Have you tested positive for COVID-19 or been exposed to someone who has?
 - ___ Have you had a fever in the past 3 days?
 - ___ Have you had a cough or shortness of breath in the past 3 days?
 - ___ Have you had chest pain in the past 3 days?
 - ___ Have you recently traveled to high impact areas such as New York, Detroit, etc.?
 - ___ Have you experience a change in taste or smell?
- Provide mask and/or gloves for patient if they don't have their own.
- Provide alcohol gel for patient to disinfect hands.

COVID-19 Patient or Suspect procedures:

- Provide patient with contact information to be tested.
- Provide patient with contact information for where they may be examined.



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