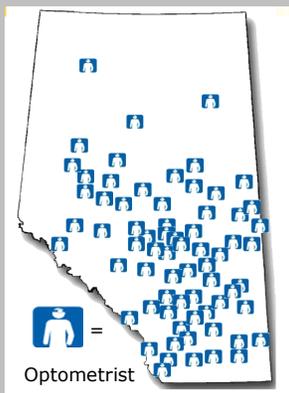


# Optometry in Alberta

## Fact Sheet

### FAST FACTS ABOUT OPTOMETRY IN ALBERTA

- 490 optometrists work in Alberta.
- Offices located in 80 communities across the province.
- Perform approximately 75% of all primary vision care and eye health examinations in Albertans.
- Operate independent businesses, franchises, or work in large retail stores.
- Have prescribed topical medication since 1996 to treat or control certain eye conditions, infections or diseases.
- Practice with an increased emphasis on management of eye disease.
- Highly involved in the community working with seniors, new mothers, multicultural groups, homeless organizations, Kindergarten and school groups, and service clubs.
- Work in conjunction with ophthalmologists, family physicians, and other allied health care providers.



**Optometrists promote excellence in the practice of optometry and work to enhance public recognition of optometry as the primary vision care provider in Alberta.**

### WHAT IS AN OPTOMETRIST?

Today's doctor of optometry must complete a Bachelor of Science degree and a four-year Doctor of Optometry degree at an accredited university's School of Optometry. An optometrist is an independent primary health care provider who specializes in the examination, diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of disease and disorders of the eye.

This includes;

- The examining of the human eye by any method (other than surgery) to diagnose, treat, and/or refer for treatment any abnormal condition of the eye, in cooperation with physicians and other health professionals.
- Assessing, diagnosing, and treating visual defects such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, and binocular vision disorders such as amblyopia (lazy eye) or strabismus (an eye turn).
- The prescribing, fitting and application of glasses, contact lenses or other devices to correct, relieve or treat the eye.
- The prescribing, supervising and managing of therapy for the improvement/monitoring of visual health.

To practice in Alberta, all optometrists must be registered with the Alberta College of Optometrists, and comply with the Continuing Competence Program under the Health Professions Act of Alberta.

### EYE SEE ... EYE LEARN®

Eye See ... Eye Learn® is an early childhood eye health and vision awareness program funded by Alberta Education and designed to ensure eye health and/or vision problems are not a factor in preventing children from reaching their full learning potential. One in four children begin grade one with an undiagnosed vision or eye health problem, and as many as 60% of children identified as having reading difficulties have undetected vision problems.

The success of the ESEL program relies on the involvement of both parents and teachers. Each fall, teachers send over 50,000 parent information packages home with Kindergarten students. Optometrists across the province conduct thousands of eye exams on these students looking for vision problems and eye health issues.

Because of the generous donations of industry sponsors, more than 1,000 Kindergarten children per year receive free eye glasses through the Eye See...Eye Learn® program. Parents of Kindergarten age children are now assured their children have the proper vision and ocular health to succeed in school and beyond.



Fribbit® is the friendly Eye See... Eye Learn® Mascot

***Your Eyes Deserve an Optometrist!***

# Optometry in Alberta—Fact Sheet

## DID YOU KNOW?

Optometrists conduct eye health exams for various vocations, occupations, and groups so they may meet appropriate vision standards, including:

- All Classes of Alberta Driver's Licences
- Colour vision and near vision acuity for employees of companies applying for ISO 9001 accreditation
- Commercial and private pilot licences
- Diabetic eye exams for driver's licences
- Night Vision Assessment for Alberta Police and Sheriffs
- Non Destructive Testing Inspectors (pipeline inspectors)
- RCMP, city police, firefighters – Vision test for program applicants
- Truck, Taxi, and Ambulance Driver Licences – Eye exams

**Alberta Association of Optometrists**  
(780) 451-6824  
optometrists.ab.ca



**Alberta College of Optometrists**  
(780) 466-5999  
collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca



## MEDICALLY NECESSARY

Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Association of Optometrists continue to work together on eye health initiatives. We continue to educate all stakeholders about the changes in coverage for medically necessary eye health visits for Albertans between the ages of 19 – 64. This age group no longer has to pay out-of-pocket for such services. A medically necessary visit to an optometrist includes;

- Assessment of retinal or vitreal detachments.
- Assessment of sudden changes in vision.
- Monitoring for diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma related issues.
- Pre and post-operative optometric care for cataract patients.
- Removal of foreign objects in the eye.
- Treatment of eye infections, inflammation, or injuries including the use of topical medications.

The expanded coverage for medically necessary optometric visits creates another eye health option for previously uninsured patients, reducing emergency room visits and alleviating strain on the health care system. This ensures Albertans continue to receive the best possible eye health care. It also provides for increased collaboration between family physicians, ophthalmologists and allied health care providers.

## PROTECTING WORKER'S EYES

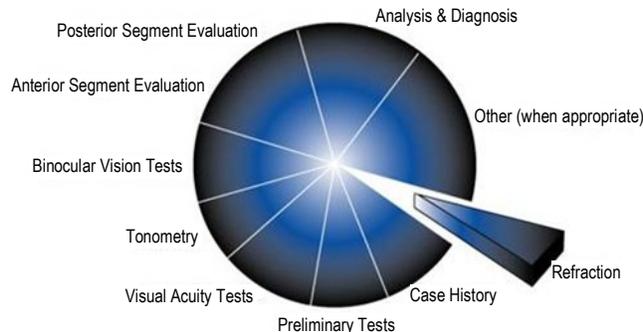
In the workplace, eye injuries can occur by foreign objects striking the eye, chemical splashes, flying dust or particulates in the air or exposure to ultraviolet radiation. Protecting the worker's eyes is vital.

The AAO administers an eye safety program called Occupational Vision Care (OVC). The OVC program is a comprehensive vision care plan that provides for both eye health exams as well as prescription safety eyewear for the employees of almost 300 companies across Alberta.

Workers start by going to any of the over 400 participating optometrists' offices across the province with a company specific OVC authorization form. They receive a comprehensive eye health exam and are then dispensed prescription safety eye glasses that meet the needs of both the employee's company coverage policy as well as meeting all CSA and Alberta Occupational and Health Safety requirements.

## COMPONENTS OF AN EYE EXAMINATION

A comprehensive eye examination is a battery of tests performed by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist to assess a patient's eye muscles, vision, and eye health. The examination may detect many preventable eye diseases (such as glaucoma) or signs of systemic diseases that can affect the eye (such as diabetes or high blood pressure). Without early detection and proper treatment, many eye diseases can cause unnecessary loss of vision for Albertans.



A stand-alone refraction, or sight test, is performed by an optician. It can be used to verify a patient's prescription but does not detect undiagnosed eye diseases.

The pie chart demonstrates the variety of test procedures used by an optometrist to detect and assess a multitude of vision or eye health issues.

