



May is Vision Health Month: What You Should Know About a Comprehensive Eye Exam



May is Vision Health Month, so what better time to launch a new monthly vision health education series from the Canadian Association of Optometrists? Each month we will provide insights into important services that optometrists provide as part of the comprehensive and follow-up (recall) eye examinations, services that not only identify the need for glasses but also identify risks for common eye diseases that can lead to blindness if left undetected and untreated. This information should help you identify any gaps in your vision care plan and provide you with the tools to modernize your plan to ensure it meets best practice standards. Please join us for a few minutes each month for a unique insight into the field of optometry and comprehensive eye examinations.

The average Canadian typically thinks of corrective lenses when it comes to a visit to the optometrist for an eye examination. However, optometrists are looking for much more than whether you require an updated prescription. A comprehensive eye exam can screen for risk factors and diagnose eye diseases before a patient even realizes they have a vision issue. Prevention along with early detection and treatment is crucial in mitigating the progress of vision loss, so routine comprehensive eye examinations are key. Usually, these visits are every 24 months for healthy working age adults, or every 12 months for children, those with specific conditions and for older adults.

While most group vision care plans have limited liability for eye diseases after a diagnosis is made, they play a critical role up to the point of diagnosis. In some provinces, comprehensive eye examinations and follow-up appointments for those at risk may not be covered by provincial healthcare plans. Moreover, in provinces where healthcare coverage does exist, it is oftentimes inadequate, limiting the number of eye exams to only one every 24 months, even when more frequent follow-up examinations are indicated.

Once a diagnosis of a serious eye disease is made by an optometrist, most provincial health plans will provide coverage for their monitoring and will reimburse the cost of some diagnostic and therapeutic tools. These services may be provided by optometrists or ophthalmologists. However, there are gaps in provincial coverage. These gaps exist most frequently for those between the ages of 20 and 64. Up-to-date group vision care benefits are key to filling the gaps in provincial coverage and allowing for the early detection, prevention and treatment of eye damage that may interfere with the ability to work or carry on the activities of daily living.

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) recommends that plan sponsors, insurers, and group benefit advisors review group vision care plans regularly to identify and fill any gaps in provincial coverage. Doing so will ensure that plan members and their dependents have access to the services of an optometrist for routine eye examinations, follow-up visits, and additional diagnostic testing, monitoring, and treatment for serious eye diseases.

CAO represents more than 80% of optometrists across Canada who are committed to the eye health of Canadians. If you require any assistance, have any questions, or would like to consult with the CAO on how to examine your vision care plan for gaps in care and help modernize it, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at info@opto.ca.

You will be able to access each of these pieces in a pdf format after their release at www.dontlosesight.ca.