

DOCTORS OF OPTOMETRY

ALBERTA *fast facts*

Our vision
is to advance
the profession of
optometry to deliver
leading edge eye
care for every
Albertan.

WHAT IS A DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY?

Today's doctor of optometry must complete a undergraduate degree and then a four-year Doctor of Optometry degree. They specialize in the examination, diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of disease and disorders of the eye.

To practice in Alberta, all doctors of optometry must be registered with the Alberta College of Optometrists under the *Health Professions Act*.

Optometrists' Current Scope of Practice Includes:

- Performing eye exams and other specialty examinations.
- Diagnosing, treating and managing eye conditions and diseases.
- Prescribing and fitting eyeglasses, contact lenses and other corrective devices.
- Prescribing Schedule 1 and 2 drugs within the practice of optometry.
- Ordering and analyzing laboratory tests.
- Ordering or applying ultrasound imaging.
- Collaborate with ophthalmologists, family physicians, nurse practitioners, and other allied health care providers.

Benefiting Albertans and the Health Care System

- The optometry fee agreement with the provincial government expired in 2014. This decade-long gap, combined with rising clinic overhead, is threatening long-term access to local, publicly funded vision care.
- Optometrists are responsible for 80% of Alberta's primary vision care and eye health exams.
- Serving well over 1.5 million publicly and privately paid patients per year, many that do not go to an ophthalmologist.
- Urgent treatment at optometry clinics has helped reduced ER visits seven of the past nine years. (AB Primary and Preventative Health Services data)
- The large majority of ER visits for eye conditions can be seen by optometrists. (Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine, 2018)
- Provide the lowest cost-per-patient (\$104) among physicians and allied health care providers. (Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan 2021/2022)
- Vision correction is considered to be one of the most cost-effective interventions in human and economic development. (World Health Organization, 2026)

fast facts ABOUT OPTOMETRY IN ALBERTA

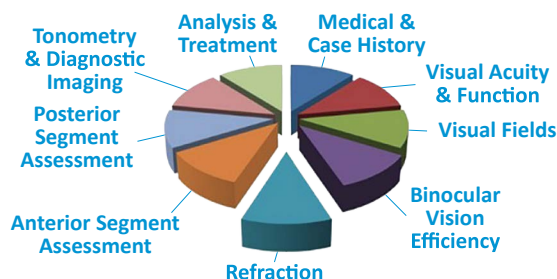
- More than 960 doctors of optometry work in more than 120 Alberta communities.
- Operating with flexibility, these professionals practice through independent businesses, franchises, or within large retail stores.
- Accessibility is a priority, with most clinics open six or seven days a week and 99% offering same-day appointments for emergencies.
- State-of-the-art equipment is standard across clinics to ensure advanced eye testing and treatment.
- Deeply involved in their communities, they actively support seniors, new mothers, multicultural groups, homeless organizations, school groups, and local service clubs.

★ Optometrist



COMPONENTS OF AN EYE EXAMINATION

An eye examination is a series of tests performed by a doctor of optometry 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 and sometimes permanent loss of vision for Albertans. The pie chart demonstrates some of the components of a complete eye health and vision assessment used by a doctor of optometry in order to diagnose and treat eye health and vision disorders.



EYE SEE...EYE LEARN™ www.optometrists.ab.ca/esel

AAO's Eye See ... Eye Learn™ is a kindergarten eye health and vision awareness program designed to ensure eye health and/or vision problems do not prevent children from reaching their full learning potential. The program provides kindergarten students with an eye exam from an optometrist, which is partially covered by Alberta Health Care. If required, kindergarten students also receive a free pair of eyeglasses from corporate sponsors.



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

Program highlights:

- Approximately 2,300 pairs of free eyeglasses are provided to kindergarten students per year.
- 59% of glasses provided are the first pair.
- All school boards in Alberta participate.
- Distribute of more than 58,000 parent information packages every fall and spring.
- Alberta Health Care partially covers eye exams (up to age 19).



MEDICAL AND URGENT EYE CARE

All Albertans have access to medical and urgent eye care provided by a doctor of optometry. Most optometrists will see patients on the same day if the matter is deemed urgent. No referral needed.

Coverage available towards medical and urgent eye care services:

- Foreign objects in the eye.
- Infection, injury or inflammation of the eye and eyelid.
- Sudden changes in vision.
- Monitoring for diabetes and glaucoma complications.
- Retinal detachment, defects and diseases.
- Pre and post-operative care for cataract patients.

Program benefits:

- Reduced strain on the healthcare system and hospital emergency rooms.
- Reduced pressure on family physicians and ophthalmologists.
- Alberta Health Care available towards medical and urgent eye care.
- Better access for patients in rural and urban communities.

SCOPE EXPANSION WE CAN *do* more

Optometrists are requesting authorization to perform limited laser procedures and superficial skin procedures. These will:

- allow patients in rural and remote communities greater access to eye health services;
- decrease wait times for physicians and specialist surgeons;
- improve eye health outcomes; and
- reduce unnecessary referrals and improve the cost-effectiveness of the health system.

More information at:

www.collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca