

Outreach with family doctors: Tips for optometrists

These tips are intended to guide optometrists when meeting with family doctors to build collaborative relationships and support continuity of care for patients.

The Alberta Association of Optometrists partnered with family doctors, optometrists, and patients to develop these outreach tips to strengthen interprofessional collaboration for improved patient care.

1. Be open to meeting with family doctors — even if you're not a clinic owner.



Improving communication with family doctors can benefit your patients, you, your team, and the optometry profession.

If you are a clinic owner, ask one of your optometrist team members to join you for a meet-and-greet. As the consistent and long-term contact in your clinic, your role in outreach with family doctors is essential.

If you are an optometrist working at a clinic, let the owner know that you are open to accompanying them, or meeting with family doctors independently.

2. Reach out to family doctors within your area and request a short meeting.



Ask about the best time to visit their clinic, as many family doctors take breaks outside of the noon hour and may only have a few minutes to meet.

You can also suggest a meet-and-greet at your clinic, or offer to meet at another nearby location if that's preferable for both you and them.

3. Provide information about the optometry scope of practice, available coverage, and clinic fees.



The latest **AAO Eye Health Exam** Referral form now provides answers to common questions from family doctors related to scope of practice and available coverage. The form can be found here: <https://optometrists.ab.ca/for-health-professionals/working-together>.

Bring a copy with you and offer to send it to their clinic so it can be uploaded to their EMR system.

You can also include your clinic's fees for services that are not fully covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.

4. Provide your clinic's hours and availability for emergency appointments.



Be sure to **mention the general wait times for appointments and how patients can book same-day emergency visits.** Include any other helpful details, such as preferred contact methods, walk-in availability, or after-hours appointment options.



5. Share some of the unique services that your clinic offers to patients.



If your clinic provides any **special treatments** or uses **new technologies**, be sure to mention them. Highlighting these services can help family doctors understand your capabilities and encourage referrals aligned with patient needs.

6. If your clinic can provide phone consultations to family doctors, be sure to mention.



In some cases, it may be helpful for family doctors to speak directly with you to ask questions about the patient's report. If this is possible, be sure to **provide your clinic's contact details and the best way to reach you**.

7. Discuss how you keep family doctors informed about their patients.



You can **mention your preferred communication methods and ask about theirs**.

You can also mention when you typically send follow-up letters (for on-going monitoring, urgent or emergency care, responding to medical referrals, and addressing concerns) and ask about their preferred format.

If you're open to discussing exam results over the phone, be sure to let them know.

8. Let them know how they can contact you or your clinic for more information.



Provide your **business card** or a brief **information sheet** — or follow up with an **email** to ensure they have your contact details.

For more information to share with family doctors, visit: <https://optometrists.ab.ca/for-health-professionals/working-together>

Feedback about these tips? Please email us at alberta.association@optometrists.ab.ca

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