

**Our vision**  
is to ensure  
world class eye  
care for every  
Albertan.

## DOCTORS OF OPTOMETRY

## ALBERTA

## fast facts

### 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' Scope of Practice Includes:

- Performing comprehensive 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.
- Collaborating with other healthcare practitioners to ensure optimal patient care.

### Benefiting Albertans and the Health Care System

- Optometrists are responsible for 80% of Alberta's primary vision care and eye health exams.
- We see more than 1,000,000 publicly and privately paid patients per year, many that do not go to an ophthalmologist.
- Collaborate with ophthalmologists, family physicians, nurse practitioners, and other allied health care providers.
- Urgent treatment at optometry clinics has helped reduced ER visits five years in a row. (AB Health data)
- 75% of ER visits for eye conditions can be seen by optometrists. (Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine, 2018)
- Provide the lowest cost-per-patient (\$95) among physicians and allied health care providers. (Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan 2018/2019)
- Optometrists' fees for Alberta Health patients frozen five of the past seven years.

### fast facts ABOUT OPTOMETRY IN ALBERTA

- More than 850 doctors of optometry are working in more than 100 Alberta communities.
- Operate independent businesses, franchises or work in large retail stores.
- Most optometry clinics are open six or seven days a week, and 99% offer same-day appointments for emergencies.
- Clinics have state-of-the-art equipment to test and treat eyes.
- Practice with an increased emphasis on eye disease.
- Highly involved in the community, working with seniors, new mothers, multicultural groups, homeless organizations, kindergarten and school groups, and service clubs.
- 93% of practicing optometrists are members of the Alberta Association of Optometrists (AAO).

 = Optometrist



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Alberta  
Association  
of Optometrists



## **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.

## **WE CAN do more**

Updating optometrists' Scope of Practice will offer better vision care to more Albertans, at a more efficient cost for taxpayers. Benefits include:

- Improving patient outcomes by providing immediate diagnostic and treatment services
- Reducing ER backlogs and unnecessary referrals
- Increasing ease-of-access to laser glaucoma treatments
- Improved choice for Albertans with limited access to eye health care

## **EYE SEE...EYE LEARN™** **[www.optometrists.ab.ca/esel](http://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 a comprehensive eye exam from an optometrist, which is 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 1,400 pairs of free eyeglasses are provided to kindergarten students per year.
- 63% of glasses provided are the first pair.
- All school boards in Alberta participate.
- Distribute of 65,000 parent information packages every fall and spring.
- Alberta Health Care covers comprehensive eye exams (up to age 19).

## **EYESAFE™ – PROTECTING WORKERS' EYES** **[www.eyesafe.ca](http://www.eyesafe.ca)**

Through AAO's Eyesafe™ program, Alberta optometrists provide comprehensive vision care plans to more than 300 businesses and thousands of workers across the province. Employees of participating companies are eligible for comprehensive eye exams, prescription safety glasses, eyewear accessories and other services. Eyesafe™ ensures safety glasses meet Alberta Occupational Health & Safety Regulations.



## **COMPONENTS OF AN EYE EXAMINATION**

A comprehensive 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. A stand-alone refraction, or sight test, performed by an optician can only measure a patient's prescription but does not detect undiagnosed eye diseases.

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.

