

COVID-19 Guidelines for Registered Opticians

Effective March 21, 2022, the Nova Scotia government will remove many of the restrictions enforced to fight Covid-19. However, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to pose a public health risk, and all registrants should continue to take precautions that ensures safety for themselves, patients, and staff.

The College recognizes that there are many differences between practice environments, and that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. For that reason, the following guidelines have been drafted to broadly accommodate these differences while emphasizing the need for registrants to keep health and safety considerations paramount.

***NOTE:** Employers should continue to be aware that Covid-19 is a workplace hazard and employees must be protected. Opticians who employ others or operate a health facility must also familiarize themselves with their additional obligations under Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

The Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians (The College) has developed the following guidelines for Registered Opticians. These Guidelines work in conjunction with the [Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians Standards of Practice](#). All Standards apply, in particular:

Standard 5 Maintenance of Professional and Hygienic Premises:

Dispensing Opticians shall engage in dispensing activities from premises which are professional in appearance and maintained in a sanitary and hygienic condition.

Standard 6 Use of Current, Accurate and Hygienic Equipment:

Opticians must maintain and utilize current, accurate and hygienic equipment. Each Dispensing Optician shall have:

- a) adjustment and bench tools
- b) lensometer
- c) lens gauge
- d) frame heater

Opticians must take reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of contamination and subsequent transmission of infectious agents within their practice environment and ensure the practice site is equipped and maintained. Continuing to adhere to strict disinfection and infection control protocols is mandatory.

It is important to be cognizant of the fact that we are still working in a pandemic environment and that some procedures and guidelines should remain in place as recommended by the Nova Scotia health authority.

The Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians continues to recommend the following:

Vaccinations – NSCDO supports Covid-19 vaccinations and encourages all registrants to consider vaccination if you have not already done so.

Surgical/Procedural Masks – Although it will no longer be a requirement to wear a face mask, working in an eyewear dispensary requires opticians to be in close proximity of patients therefore, NSCDO is highly recommending Opticians, and their patients continue to wear masks.

Social Distancing – Capacity restrictions will be lifted but whenever possible, NSCDO recommends maintaining a 6 feet/2 metre distance from others. It is also recommended that any Plexiglass or plastic barriers or shields remain in place. Offices that have lab, diagnostic and ancillary services within their clinic should consider pre-booked appointments and continue to maintain public health protocols for physical distancing.

Cleaning and Disinfecting – it is recommended that cleaning continue for all workspaces and high touch areas.

- It is recommended that opticians clean and disinfect any frame that is tried on or handled by patients with an approved disinfection method.
- It is recommended opticians keep equipment, tools, touch surfaces and common areas disinfected between every patient/use.
- It is recommended opticians continue effective hand hygiene, washing with soap and water for 20 seconds or using an approved hand sanitizer at the beginning and end of a shift and before and after each patient.

Reduce Contact - As much as practically possible, try to find ways to eliminate or reduce physical contact with patients:

- Virtual care using telephone, video, email, and other technology can still be an option.
- Continue to offer delivery by mail, courier services or curbside pick-up.
- Provide contactless payments methods with debit tap payment, e-transfer and emailing receipts.

Additional Recommendations:

Use a **pupillary** distance measure on file or use an electronic device that maintains a distance greater than 6-feet/2-meters.

Use an electronic device or mark a reference point on the lenses, have patient try on the glasses and observe from a distance greater than 6-feet/2-meters to obtain a segment height.

Ask patients to not speak during measurements and other close encounters. Strongly recommend that a face mask continue to be worn by clients during close proximity procedures.

Prior to and after adjusting or repairing patient's eyewear, frames must be properly cleaned and sanitized.

It is important that all protocols implemented be communicated to patients in advance.

Optometry dispensaries should continue to treat Covid-19 as a hazard and implement protocols such as asking patients to wear masks for their safety due to required close contact. To continue physical distancing and maintain a 6-feet/2-metre distance when possible or by continuing to reduce walk-ins with appointment only practices.

These guidelines will be posted on the Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians website at www.nscdo.ca