[State] Doctors of Optometry Urge Patients to Schedule Eye Exams in 2021

*Safety protocols remain in place, full range of eye and vision care available.*

[City, State – January XX, 2021] -- Many patients postponed routine eye exams due to the pandemic in 2020. Many reasons prevented scheduling this important part of a person’s overall health routine, but doctors of optometry are continuing to follow safety protocols and encourage current, and new, patients to have an in-person comprehensive eye exam. [State affiliate] is working with the American Optometric Association (AOA) to ensure uninterrupted safe delivery of essential eye care as the COVID-19 public health emergency continues.

“Eye health and vision care is essential care, and the good news is that many doctors of optometry in [state] have, or will soon be, receiving one of the COVID-19 vaccines as frontline health providers to ensure patient safety,” says [spokesperson].

[**IF APPLICABLE IN YOUR STATE**] “In addition, in [state], doctors of optometry are licensed to administer the vaccine during this public health emergency, making it more accessible to people in our state as supplies become available in each community.”

While changes have varied with individual practices over the last several months, patients can be assured that doctors of optometry are adhering to federal, state and local health directives regarding infection prevention measures and have implemented appropriate safety procedures within the office.

“Our nation’s, and our profession’s, response to the crisis has continued to evolve as circumstances warrant,” says William T. Reynolds, O.D., AOA president. “We are guided by safeguarding our patients as our top priority. If you have not been seen by your doctor of optometry within the last year, our members are ready, willing and able to provide the level of eye care that you need, whether it’s time for a comprehensive eye exam, new contact lenses or eyeglasses, or an urgent care need.”

To prepare for your office visit, the AOA and [state affiliate] offer the following recommendations:

* When scheduling your appointment, ask your doctor about safety protocols they have in place to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the office.
* Notify your doctor if you or anyone in your household display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. If you are experiencing symptoms such as loss of the sense of smell or taste, have fever or cough, consult with your primary care provider first unless you are experiencing an ocular-related emergency warning signs.
* The use of a facemask or cloth face cover that covers your nose and mouth is strongly recommended and may even be required to enter a healthcare facility.
* Continue to keep six feet between yourself and others. A cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands while in the office.
* Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; bring hand sanitizer with you in case you are unable to wash your hands as necessary.
* For more information about eye health and to find a local AOA doctor of optometry, visit [aoa.org/healthyeyes](https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes?sso=y).