

COVID-19 Protocols: Infection control, Hygiene, and PPE

The following is advice you may wish to follow whilst seeing patients at this time. This is not definitive and is general advice produced by the LOC with no input from any professional body of government organisation. Please therefore ensure you are aware of all current advice from NHSE, PHE, and The Optical Bodies.

The College of Optometrists have a specific page for their advice: <https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/coronavirus-2019-advice-for-optometrists.html>

Consider having a locked door policy for the practice. Keep the door locked unless someone is entering or leaving the practice.

Only have patients attend the practice by appointment. Repairs and collections of contact lenses can be carried out from the door only under most instances.

Remember, it appears not all patients with COVID will exhibit symptoms.

Transfer of items to / from a patient

Goods can be exchanged through the letterbox.

Small repairs can be left on your doorstep or posted through a letter box for you to deal with away from the patient, then posted back to the patient, or left on the doorstep for the patient to collect/lift up, providing the patient remains as suitable distance while this action is done.

Consider disinfecting any goods received from a patient. Complete any work carried out on it, it disinfected again, and make an appointment made for the patient to collect it.

Collections could be carried out outside the practice. Consider placing the item placed on the ground for the patient to pick it up. - Stay two metres away from patients at all times unless wearing appropriate PPE.

Accepting payment Use contact-less where possible, ask the patients to pay via their direct debit scheme, over the phone, or by Paypal, and delivery arranged. If a chip and pin transaction needs to be carried out, minimal close patient contact should be carried out while following PPE guidance. Clean the terminal after handled by the patient and yourself.

Clean down any surfaces patients have been near, with disinfectant spray effective against viruses.

Patient examinations

Ensure you have “verbally screened” all patients for potential COVID symptoms. We have a COVID questionnaire on the website.

Consider undertaking a consultation by WhatsApp, FaceTime or Skype instead of seeing the patient.

Do not see a patient:

- If a patient is showing symptoms of COVID-19 such as a high temperature or a fever, or has

been in contact with someone who has it

- If the test is routine it should be postponed

Do see a patient:

- If there are strong clinical or other reasons to provide a sight test urgently, but you must do everything you can to mitigate the health risks of doing so

If after remote consultation, a face-to-face appointment is required, only arrange an appointment if appropriate.

If it is not appropriate to conduct a face-to-face consultation and the patient requires urgent / essential care that cannot wait until the COVID crisis is over, seek to provide the best available alternative arrangement without the patient attending practice. If required, speak to the hospital / GP about an onward referral.

The following should be considered a potential option in your practices:

- On entry to practice, all personnel should be careful to not touch anything, go straight to the sink and wash their hands with soap – this includes patients and staff. –
- Patients could be given a paper face mask and asked to wear it as they enter the practice.
- Touch points (door handles etc) to be wiped down with disinfecting agents after every patient interaction
- Remember guidance for social distancing, keep 2m away as much as possible
- All equipment used must be disinfected before and after every patient episode, including your hands. Follow College of Optometry disinfection protocols for reusable equipment.
- Do the minimal number of tests possible to investigate the presenting complaint.
- Do you need to use following equipment when conducting examinations (alternative in bracket)
 - Automated visual fields (gross perimetry only)
 - NCT (iCare or GAT)
 - Direct Ophthalmoscopy (Headband BIO > Slit Lamp)
- Don't talk to the patient when you are close. And tell the patient they must not speak either.
- When you have assessed the patient, move well away from them.

You should have appropriate PPE to be worn during patient interaction

Consider using the following:

Scrubs – all day at work

Gloves – could wear for each patient contact (fitting of spectacles or clinical examination) and dispose of after each patient contact. Hand wash before putting on gloves.

Face / eye shields – The LOC is sourcing some shields for use in the region. Use for each clinical examination and if you are likely to be within 2m of a patient. Useful eye protection.

Aprons (even bin bags) – especially for a clinical examination. Dispose of after each patient contact

Fluid resistant masks – ideally for all staff Type IIR surgical masks as a minimum

Slit lamp breath shield – homemade or purchased

Paper masks for patients

A respirator is currently not a requirement.

If you choose to use scrubs, bring them to work and change into them on arrival. Once finished at work, change out of the scrubs on departure and take them home in a washable bag so that you can also launder with the scrubs inside. Scrubs will need to be laundered with detergent after every visit to the practice.

We are waiting further guidance for disposal of PPE. If you have large clinical waste bins, these could be used. We are currently advising double bagging all waste that may be contaminated with COVID19 virus and storing for disposal at a later date.

PHE has guidance on putting on and taking off PPE. This should be done in a specific order. Wash hands frequently throughout the process of putting on and taking off PPE. The following You Tube video produced by PHE “COVID-19: Donning of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)” might be useful to watch. However, it was produced for hospital staff. The follow on video speaks how to remove PPE. https://youtu.be/kKz_vNGsNhc

The LOC has managed to source one face shield per practice, more details on website.

The following sources may be used for PPE. The LOC cannot guarantee costs or availability:

National Supply Line number is 0800 915 9964 for PPE.

Scrubs: <https://www.grahamegardner.co.uk> or similar

