



# Frequently Asked Questions On Doctors of Optometry



## What is a Doctor of Optometry?

Doctors of Optometry are highly skilled and knowledgeable health care practitioners who examine, assess, measure, diagnose, treat, manage and correct diseases and disorders of the human visual system, the eye and its associated structures. They currently provide the majority of eye and vision care in Alberta. In addition, optometrists play a major role in a patient's overall health and well-being by collaborating and communicating with physicians and other health care practitioners when ocular signs of systemic diseases (such as diabetes and hypertension) are observed during regular comprehensive optometric eye examinations.

## What Training Does a Doctor of Optometry Receive?

Doctors of Optometry complete a minimum of three years of undergraduate work in a university B.Sc. Program; and, a four-year Doctor of Optometry Degree Program at an accredited university-based School of Optometry. The entrance requirements (Grade Point Average, national Optometry Entrance Exam, interview, volunteer experiences, communication skills, applicant aptitude, etc.) are similar to that required for other Doctorate-level health care practitioners such as dentists and chiropractors.

Upon graduation, all optometrists must successfully pass the Canadian Assessment of Competency in Optometry national board exam, a provincial Jurisprudence Exam as well as providing a clean criminal records check (including a Vulnerable Persons Check) before being registered to practice.

## Where are Doctors of Optometry Trained?



Canada has two accredited Doctor of Optometry programs – The University of Waterloo (in English) and the University of Montreal (in French). In addition, the United States has 22 accredited Doctor of Optometry Programs in various States. The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) is the only accrediting body for professional

Optometry Degree (OD) programs in North America. All Canadian and US Schools of Optometry are reviewed by the ACOE on a regular basis to ensure they meet or exceed predetermined academic, clinical and research standards.

## How do Optometrists maintain their Competence?

All Doctors of Optometry are required to complete a minimum of 150 Continuing Education credits and practice for a minimum of 750 hours in each 3-year Competency Period. In addition, all optometrists must also successfully pass an on-site Practice Review on a regularly scheduled basis.

## What are the Key Benefits of Optometric Practice?

- **Improved Access to Vision Care Services:** Optometrists practice in over 80 different towns and cities in Alberta ensuring that Albertans all across the province have quick and easy access to comprehensive vision care services. This quick access also translates to reduced wait times for vision care services.
- **Improved Patient Outcomes:** Medical research proves that the earlier a patient is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance of a successful, positive and long-lasting outcome.
- **Integration of Optometric Services:** Doctors of Optometry work in collaboration and cooperation with all other members of the health care team.
- **Reduced Pressure on the Health Care System:** Increased utilization of optometric services for eye-related emergencies will reduce pressure on Emergency Rooms and Family Physician offices.
- **Reduced Health Care Costs:** Since most patients can be diagnosed and treated during their initial optometric appointment, subsequent or referral appointments to other health care practitioners (and thus additional AHC billings) can be avoided.

### *Did you know?*

Approximately 80% of what a child learns comes through their eyes.



### *Did you know?*

The Alberta College of Optometrists has been governing its Regulated Members and protecting the public since 1921.

## Who Regulates Doctors of Optometry?



The Alberta College of Optometrists is the regulatory body for all optometrists in Alberta. It is mandated by the Alberta Health Professions Act to govern its regulated members in a manner that protects and serves the public interest

### *Did you know?*

Optometrists currently provide over 80% of primary eye and vision care services in Alberta

## What Services do Doctors of Optometry Provide?

- ☐ Comprehensive eye exams.
- ☐ Prescribing topical and oral pharmaceuticals for eye and vision disorders and conditions.
- ☐ Performing glaucoma assessments and treatment.
- ☐ Ordering and analyzing laboratory tests.
- ☐ Pre and post-operative eye surgical assessments.
- ☐ Diagnosing vision defects and issuing prescriptions for glasses.
- ☐ Selecting, fitting, selling and adjusting eyeglasses.
- ☐ Fitting, selling and assessing contact lenses.
- ☐ Diagnosing, assessing and treating binocular, perceptual and accommodative disorders and conditions.
- ☐ Provision of visual training programs.
- ☐ Diagnosing, assessing and treating low vision disorders and conditions.
- ☐ Performing office and workplace ergonomic, lighting and environmental assessments.
- ☐ Providing lifestyle counselling for treatment and prevention of conditions that may affect vision and/or eye health.
- ☐ Removal of ocular foreign bodies.
- ☐ Participation in medical, optometric and public health research and forums.



### *Did you know?*

The number of people experiencing vision loss doubles every decade after age 40 and triples after age 75. Adults in these age groups require comprehensive eye examinations on a more frequent basis.