

Covid-19 exit phase recommendations

20 May 2020



The Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) working group on Covid-19 has produced recommendations and resources to help if you are making plans to re-open your optical practice once permitted, in line with an easing of the current measures associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The recommendations, which focus on safety for both patients and practitioners, should also be read by employees and locum staff to inform best practice.

In time, when we move away from lockdown and consider an easing of the current measures associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, plans to re-open optical practices safely, for both patients and staff, need to be thought out and put in place.

ABDO's COVID-19 working group has produced this paper to provide members with recommendations and considerations to support optical practices to prepare for reopening to provide routine eyecare, once permitted.

The current clinical advice to deliver essential/ urgent/ emergency eyecare only remains and remote consultations should be provided to patients for their eyecare needs in the first instance. Routine sight tests continue to be suspended until further notice. This remains in place at date of publication. ABDO is working with the College of Optometrists and other stakeholders to update specific clinical advice in due course.

Once routine eyecare is able to be delivered, ABDO recommends that practices prioritise patients who should have attended for their routine checks during the months of lockdown, whilst considering risk factors associated with these patients as well as those who will be due their routine appointments once lockdown is lifted.

Appointments will be limited, due to arrangements made internally to adhere to social distancing. Some patients may still self-isolate if they are within the shielded groups. ABDO is working with OFNC colleagues, government optometric advisers and representative bodies throughout the UK to review the provision of eyecare to shielded groups in their homes and beyond.

Please note that this is not exhaustive but it covers the main points which should be considered at this time in line with official public health guidance. This is subject to change and we will keep members updated as the situation evolves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PRACTICE OWNERS AND MANAGERS SHOULD:

- Implement a reporting system for staff every day before they start work and when they finish; keep a log if feeling well or unwell – advise if unwell to not come to work; provide access to COVID-19 testing if necessary; remind staff of the current public health guidance on self-isolating if someone they live with has symptoms of covid-19.

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- Provide staff with the correct PPE when providing care within a two-meter radius. Also, there may be staff that live with family members who are within the shielded groups and we would expect them to be provided with PPE too.

Public Health England guidance states that anyone providing care within the two-meter radius should wear a surgical mask, gloves, apron and protective eyewear. All PPE used should meet UK standards and carry the CE mark. All staff should be advised on the donning and doffing PPE as well as how to dispose of it. Practices that do not have access to the NHS clinical waste disposal service should dispose of PPE by double bagging in a black bin bag, leave for 72 hours and then dispose through general waste. We suggest the black bin bags be dated when using this process.

Find out more about PPE here:

www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/#ppe

www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe

- Provide staff with guidance on new working protocols regarding regular hand washing and use of hand sanitiser in line with national guidance.
- Consider making posters available on hand washing/using hand sanitiser to remind staff to do this before and after every patient.

The WHO and NHS have posters available to download here:

www.who.int/gpsc/5may/resources/posters/en/

www.bing.com/shop?q=nhs+hand+washing+posters&FORM=SHOPPA&originIGUID=3BF9C88ED6A14C788F9598961C168A1C

- Review staff dress code. It may be that practices issue uniforms and request that staff change in to these when they start work and change again when they finish to avoid contamination from outside practice. Some practices already insist on medium/long hair to be tied back and beards to be kept trim as well as no jewellery being worn except wedding rings.
- Fit reception/dispensing areas with transparent screens. You can find a list of suppliers here: <https://www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/#return>
- Fit optical equipment with safety guards. You can find suppliers here: <https://www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/#return>
- Stagger appointments to limit the number of staff and patients who will be in the practice at any one time. Doors can be locked to help manage this process. Pre-book all appointments including spectacle dispensing, repairs and adjustments.
- Advise patients of the changes in delivering eyecare. Examples of a patient leaflet and practice poster can be downloaded here: <https://www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/practice-poster-and-leaflet/>

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- Amend practice layout to adhere to the two-meter social distancing rules for patients and staff. Use bright coloured floor marking tape to clearly show the two-meter points between seats in the waiting area and on floor space in communal areas including around the reception/dispensing areas. Alternatively put ticks and crosses on seats that can and can't be used. Get more information on social distancing here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>
- Request that patients attending to collect spectacles or contact lenses pay over the phone in advance of their appointment or use contactless in practice where possible. Practices should follow the Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance guidance: <https://www.pcicomplianceguide.org/faq/#>. Practices that do not have card paying facilities should contact their bank for advice.
- Ask patients not to talk when equipment is operated in close proximity.
- Remove unnecessary clutter from all areas within the practice to reduce the risk of disease being transferred, such as pen holders, books, magazines and toys. You may want to ask patients to bring a pen to sign any necessary paperwork.
- Produce protocols for the cleaning of practices on a daily basis for all communal areas and in between every patient within the consulting room and dispensing area. All areas should be cleaned with household disinfectant/alcohol wipes, especially surfaces, and anything on them, that will be touched regularly by different individuals. This could include but is not limited to door handles, table tops, light switches, computers and phones. Practice cleaning should include the use of disinfectant and all optical equipment should be disinfected as per the manufacturers' guidance as well as spectacle frames.

ABDO's guidelines on infection control are available here:

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/regulation-and-policy/advice-and-guidelines/regulatory/infection-control/>

Guidance on suspected cases is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases/investigation-and-initial-clinical-management-of-possible-cases-of-wuhan-novel-coronavirus-wn-cov-infection#criteria>

- Implement protocols for patients when selecting spectacles. It could be that patients are asked to again use hand sanitiser or wear gloves (provided by the practice within the dispensing area) before they select and try on frames. Once a frame is selected, all other frames tried on should be set aside and then cleaned before being returned to display stands. The recommendation is for all patients requiring new spectacles to be given an appointment therefore the frame selection process is always managed to allow frames to be cleaned after each patient that handles them.
- Pre-screen patients by telephone the day before their appointment to establish that they are not symptomatic. You can find an example pre-screening form here: <https://www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/#return>

Ask patients to cancel if they feel unwell at all on the day of their appointment. It may be that practices take patient's temperatures on arrival, as some dentists will be doing. <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/accidents-first-aid-and-treatments/how-do-i-take-someones-temperature/>

Covid-19 exit phase recommendations (CONTINUED)

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SHIELDED GROUPS

- Ensure staff are aware of the advice provided to shielded groups and manage these patients' eyecare needs, as clinically necessary, as safely as possible:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

It may be that practices provide a day, morning or afternoon where appointments are dedicated to seeing shielded patients only. Providing extra time in between appointments to avoid contact with any other patients and only do this if these patients can avoid the use of public transport to attend the practice. It may be that all staff are asked to wear PPE as well as the shielded patients during the full time of being in the practice.

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