

Understand the risks to your health

Clear vision does not necessarily mean healthy eyes. If you substitute an online refractive eye test for a comprehensive eye exam, key eye issues could be missed and you could be putting your eye health—and possibly your overall health—at serious risk.

What is an online refractive test?

An online refractive test is a service provided through a website. It is a vision test used as a tool by some California licensed eye care practitioners only to determine your eyeglass or contact lens prescription.

Consumers take the test for a fee and can then receive a prescription for eyeglasses or contact lenses from a California-licensed eye care practitioner.



CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF
OPTOMETRY

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ONLINE REFRACTIONS:
NOT A COMPREHENSIVE EYE EXAM



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What does a comprehensive eye exam cover that an online refractive test does not?

As opposed to an online refractive test, a tool used to only determine the appropriate lens power needed to improve your vision, a comprehensive eye exam entails an optometrist or ophthalmologist evaluating the overall health of your eyes by:

- Understanding your case history.
- Completing a thorough exam, which will determine the internal and external health of your eyes.
- Conducting an evaluation of your refractive status (how your eyes focus and coordinate) and determining a prescription accordingly.

Are comprehensive eye exams only for the elderly?

No. You do not have to be elderly, or even middle-aged, to have eye health issues. For example, young people can have diabetes, retinal tears, and eye infections that can be detected during a comprehensive eye exam.

Why is a comprehensive eye exam important?

The California State Board of Optometry, a consumer protection agency that licenses and regulates optometrists and the optometry profession, believes routine, comprehensive eye exams are crucial to maintain good eye health.

Refractive tests cannot discover eye problems such as:

- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Retinal tears and scarring
- Eye infections
- Dry eye syndrome

Some eye health issues have few warning signs and no pain. A comprehensive eye exam performed by an eye care professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist) can help ensure that a problem is found and treated early. For example, diabetes affects more than 8 percent of the U.S. population, but about 7 million people are unaware they are diabetic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

