

## REGULAR CHECK-UPS PROTECT YOUR VISION

Did you know that the leading cause of blindness for people under 65 is diabetes? That cataracts and glaucoma can be treated and good vision maintained? Good eye health starts with going to your optometrist or ophthalmologist to ensure that your eyes are monitored and conditions detected early.

Some eye problems have few warning signs and no pain. Regular visits to an eye care professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist) can help ensure that any eye problem is found and treated early.

The California State Board of Optometry believes that routine eye exams are crucial for you to maintain good eye health.



# FOCUS ON YOUR EYES

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT AN EYE EXAMINATION



CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF  
**OPTOMETRY**

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## EYE CARE PROVIDERS – THE FOUR O’S

**Optometrists** provide primary vision care. They conduct examinations to determine the overall health of the eyes and screen for disease such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, hypertensive retinopathy, and diabetic retinopathy. They also prescribe corrective lenses - glasses and contact lenses - as needed. Some Optometrists with additional certifications can prescribe medications to treat common eye diseases such as red eye and conjunctivitis, even glaucoma. The California State Board of Optometry licenses and regulates these eye care professionals. Optometrists may use the letters O.D. after their names.

**Ophthalmologists** are medical doctors who perform eye surgeries for problems such as cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. Ophthalmologists can also treat eye diseases and prescribe corrective lenses. The Medical Board of California licenses ophthalmologists. They may use the letters M.D. after their names.

**Opticians** are individuals and businesses that fill prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses. They are regulated by the Medical Board of California.

**Optometric** assistants take a patient’s history and perform some simple vision tests, including automated tests and those that take digital images of the eye. They may also fit prescription lenses and administer certain topical medications under the supervision of an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Optometric assistants are not licensed or regulated.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR EYE EXAM

In order to evaluate the health of your eyes, an optometrist (or ophthalmologist) may:

1. Obtain and assess your case history.
2. Conduct a thorough examination to determine the internal and external health of your eyes. For instance, to evaluate for glaucoma, an optometrist may conduct a visual field evaluation and check your eye pressure.
3. Conduct a thorough evaluation of your refractive status (how your eyes focus and coordinate) and determine a prescription accordingly.

Your optometrist may dilate your eyes by administering eye drops and/or take pictures of your eye in order to diagnose and document any vision or eye health problems.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER YOUR EXAM

After your eye exam, your doctor will explain what he or she found. If an abnormality is detected, he or she will discuss treatment options.

Your doctor may also schedule a follow-up exam for you. If you need a prescription, he or she will give it to you after your exam and review your options for filling it.

## WHAT YOUR PRESCRIPTION INCLUDES

Under Federal regulations, if glasses are prescribed, optometrists or ophthalmologists must give each patient a copy of his or her prescription immediately after an eye exam; or, if contact lenses are prescribed, at the completion of a contact lens fitting process.

Once obtained, your prescription should include the prescribing optometrist’s name, license number, address, telephone number, and signature.

## MAINTAINING GOOD EYE CARE IS NOT JUST FOR ADULTS

Nearly 25 percent of school-aged children have vision problems which can cause them to struggle in school. Undetected and untreated vision problems can leave a child with permanent vision damage later in life.

Children should have their first comprehensive eye examination before they enter school.

The California State Board of Optometry is a consumer protection agency that licenses and regulates optometrists and the optometry profession. If you have questions about an optometrist, or would like to file a complaint, please contact the Board.

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