



## **Optometrists provide you with total vision care**

### **What does an Optometrist do?**

An optometrist is a registered health professional with special training in eye health and vision care. At your appointment, the optometrist will examine your eyes, checking your vision ability and eye health. Optometrists are qualified and trained to detect and correct eye problems. In other words, your optometrist is your primary eye health care provider. An optometrist is a professional who will also provide you with follow up lens and frame advice.

### **Is it important to have my eyes checked regularly?**

Yes it is important to have your eyes examined regularly. The sooner eye health and vision problems are discovered, the sooner you can be helped. Many serious eye diseases, like cataracts or glaucoma occur slowly and often without obvious signs and symptoms. Moreover, if you notice changes in your vision it is important that you make an appointment with an optometrist to get your eyes examined.

### **What should I do if I don't have an optometrist?**

In most places there will be a number of NZAO optometrists. If you have friends or family who wear glasses (or contact lenses), ask them for a recommendation, or ask your local doctor for suggestions. You can also look in the Yellow Pages section of your phone book to view a list of NZAO Optometrists in your area.

For your safety, we recommend choosing an optometrist who is a member of the New Zealand Association of Optometrists (NZAO). Members of this professional body have your interests at heart, and will make every effort to ensure that the highest quality of vision care is provided.

### **OK, so I need to see an optometrist but what happens at the appointment?**

If this is your first visit to an optometrist there is nothing to be nervous about. Part of an optometrist's profession is helping people every day from all walks of life who have concerns about their eyes. Optometrists are friendly and approachable and are here to help you with your vision care.

In the examination room your optometrist will ask about your eyes and vision, your family's eye and vision history and your general health. Specialised techniques and instruments will be used to examine the various functions of your eyes. From this information, your optometrist will be able to assess if your eyes are healthy and whether you will need some form of correcting lens.

After examining your eyes, your optometrist will discuss the results with you and offer you advice. At this point, don't hesitate to ask any questions or concerns you may have. If there are signs of eye disease or of general health problems, your optometrist can refer you to an ophthalmologist or a general practitioner.

If you need spectacles, you will be advised on a range of lenses and frames. Your optometrist will discuss with you options which best suit your requirements.

If you would like to have contact lenses, you will be advised of the most suitable type for your eyes, and carefully instructed on their use and care. Again, please do not hesitate to let your optometrist know of any concerns or questions you have; he or she is a trained professional who can ensure your eye health and vision needs are met.

### **Is there anything else an optometrist can help me with?**

Yes. Your optometrist can provide you with advice on choice of sunglasses, enquiries relating to wearing contact lens for sport, provide information about visually related learning difficulties and make suggestions for eye safety requirements at home and at work.

As a registered health professional, your optometrist can provide assistance and information for the eye conditions such as:

#### **Floaters**

Floaters (or spots) are particles which float inside the eye and cast shadows on the light sensitive tissue at the back of the eye (the *Retina*). Usually these are nothing more than a nuisance. However, floaters can result from eye disease or injury and do need assessment by your optometrist.

#### **Glaucoma**

Glaucoma is an eye disorder where the fluid pressure inside the eye causes progressive damage to parts of the optic nerve. Glaucoma usually comes without warning. There may be no symptoms in the early stages and severe loss of vision can occur before a person realises that anything is wrong. Early diagnosis by your optometrist allows the condition to be treated. Without treatment a gradual but permanent loss of vision will occur.

#### **Astigmatism**

Astigmatism is found to varying degrees in most eyes. The result of this condition is that outlines seem more blurred or shadowed vertically or horizontally (or at an angle in between). This happens because the lens inside the eye or the cornea in front of the eye is toric in shape, where it has unequal curves like a rugby ball rather than spherical like a soccer ball. Astigmatism can occur by itself or with myopia, hyperopia or presbyopia. Prescription lenses will assist astigmatism.

### **Myopia**

Myopia means short-sightedness. This is where vision is clear for near objects and blurry for objects at distance. Myopia can be corrected with the help of prescription lenses.

### **Hyperopia**

Hyperopia means long-sightedness. This is where the focus power of the eye is too little. The eye has to exert focus effort (called 'accommodation') to keep an object clear. Blurring may occur at all distances, but is more pronounced for near objects, and is sometimes intermittent. The extra effort exerted by the eyes may also cause eyestrain or headaches. Prescription lenses will assist hyperopia.

### **Presbyopia**

Presbyopia is a process that causes the lens of the eye to become less flexible with age. This makes it harder to adjust focus from one distance to another. No matter whether you normally wear spectacles or not, if you see clearly at distance with both eyes, you will start to have difficulty focussing on small print at a normal reading distance. This begins sometime in your mid-forties. The power of lenses to correct for close work becomes separate from those you may need at long distance. Reading, bifocal or progressive prescription lenses will assist with presbyopia.

### **Phorias and Tropias**

People with phorias or tropias will have problems with getting their eyes to work together. With tropia (or squint) the eyes do not work together at all. With phoria a person can co-ordinate both eyes but only with a larger effort than normal. Your optometrist can detect these problems and treatment can be in the form of glasses and/or eye exercises.

Remember, your optometrist is there to help you. Optometrists are professionals who will provide you with specialist advice on caring for your eyes. If you have noticed changes in your vision, an appointment with your NZAO Optometrist is recommended.

**Your optometrist provides you and your family with total vision care.**

**Contact NZAO:** [www.nzao.co.nz](http://www.nzao.co.nz), email: [info@nzao.co.nz](mailto:info@nzao.co.nz), phone: 0800 439 322