



AN OPTOMETRIST – THE FIRST LINE OF DETECTION FOR DIABETES



Your optometrist and diabetes

Optometrists can serve as the first line of detection and diagnosis for diabetes, which is important because 5.9 million people in the United States are not aware they have the disease. During a comprehensive eye examination, an optometrist actually examines inside the eye, seeing blood vessels directly. (The eye is the only place on the body where blood vessels can be seen without having to look through skin or other tissue.) With such a view, the optometrists can see signs and symptoms of vascular diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension. These may suggest the patient needs additional testing for blood pressure and blood glucose levels.

In addition, optometrists provide continued care for those diagnosed with diabetes by working closely with the patient's health team to monitor the disease and determine changes in eye health caused by the disease.

Dilated eye exams are covered by Medicare for diabetic patients and covered by other insurance plans. Optometrists are well trained and licensed to perform diabetic eye exams.

What is an optometrist?

As independent primary health care providers, optometrists examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures, as well as diagnose related systemic conditions.

Optometrists provide more than two thirds of the primary eye care services in the United States. They are more widely distributed geographically than other eye care providers and are readily accessible for the delivery of eye and vision care services.

There are approximately 34,000 doctors of optometry currently in practice in the United States. Optometrists practice in more than 7,000 communities, serving as the only primary eye care providers in more than 4,300 communities.

The mission of the profession of optometry is to fulfill the vision and eye care needs of the public through clinical care, research and education, all of which enhance the quality of life for our patients.

Optometrists have extensive training, having completed pre-professional undergraduate education in a college or university and four years of professional education at a college of optometry, leading to the doctor of optometry (O.D.) degree. Some optometrists also complete a one-year clinically based residency after graduation. Many optometrists have additional expertise in areas such as low-vision rehabilitation, sports vision needs, vision therapy and occupational vision.

Optometrists and their staff provide eye care to the entire family from cradle to grave.