

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Should business continue as normal?***

Yes, at present, business should continue as normal with relevant precautions taken.

### ***What if someone has symptoms that could be COVID-19?***

Individuals with a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature should not be seen for routine optometry care and should be asked to defer their treatment until clinical resolution. Therefore, when making appointments it is recommended that practice staff ask patients details regarding recent travel and if they have any of the above symptoms.

In addition, practices should contact patients by telephone on the day of their appointment to confirm that the patient is well and not exhibiting any symptoms related to COVID-19.

Should the patient report symptoms, they should not attend their appointment but should be advised to stay at home and self-isolate for fourteen days since their symptoms began, as per current government advice.

### ***What should I do if somebody attends for an appointment showing signs of infection?***

If the above precautions are taken, patients should not attend for appointments in optometric practices exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

If COVID-19 is considered possible when an appointment is already in progress, assess a suitable and safe point to bring the consultation to a close, withdraw from the room, close the door and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

Practice staff are recommended not to return to the room and for the patient to contact 111. Cleaning protocols, as per the NHS England protocols should be followed.

### ***Should I be using personal protective equipment?***

PPE equipment has been provided to General Practitioners and Pharmacists in Wales but only for use on patients who have presented to their premises seeking assessment for Covid-19 related symptoms. They have not been issued to any healthcare professions for use with routine assessments.

Individuals with a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature should not be seen for routine optometry, so PPE equipment is not currently required.

The College of Optometrists advises that face masks are not currently recommended for routine practice in primary care optometry. Practitioners should follow normal infection control procedures, for every patient, at every appointment:

- hand hygiene
- respiratory etiquette
- good disinfection practice including cleaning chin and head rests before every patient.

A cough guard on a slit lamp should also be used.

Practices may decide to clean down hard surfaces and door handles more frequently than usual.

### ***Are there any techniques I should stop doing?***

There is some evidence that Alger Brushes (burr) for the removal of foreign bodies may be considered as an aerosol generating procedure. Aerosol generating procedures are considered dangerous to the spread of the virus. Therefore, we advise that optometrists stop using this technique as part of EHEW until further advice. A needle can be used to remove a rust ring if required.

### ***Should I treat patients differently who present with viral conjunctivitis from other acute presentations?***

No, the link between COVID-19 and viral conjunctivitis is based on a small research study of 30 patients. All the patients had confirmed COVID-19 and were in hospital; only one had viral conjunctivitis. There is no suggestion that patients could have viral conjunctivitis without symptoms of COVID-19, at this stage.

Patients with symptoms of a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature should be kept away from practice and should self-isolate in line with current government advice.

### ***What should I do if I have to close my practice because of COVID-19?***

Welsh Government, Optometry Wales and the Welsh Optometric Committee are exploring potential mechanisms of financial support for practices during this difficult and unprecedented outbreak. Further details will follow as soon as they are available.

### ***I have heard that routine outpatient appointments will be cancelled, is there anything we can do to help ophthalmology?***

It is great that the profession is asking if they can help at this time. At the moment, we are not asking the profession to do anything extra. However, if you would like to complete this survey, Optometry Wales will get in touch should a need arise:  
<https://cardiff.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/help-with-ophthalmology-covid-19-response>