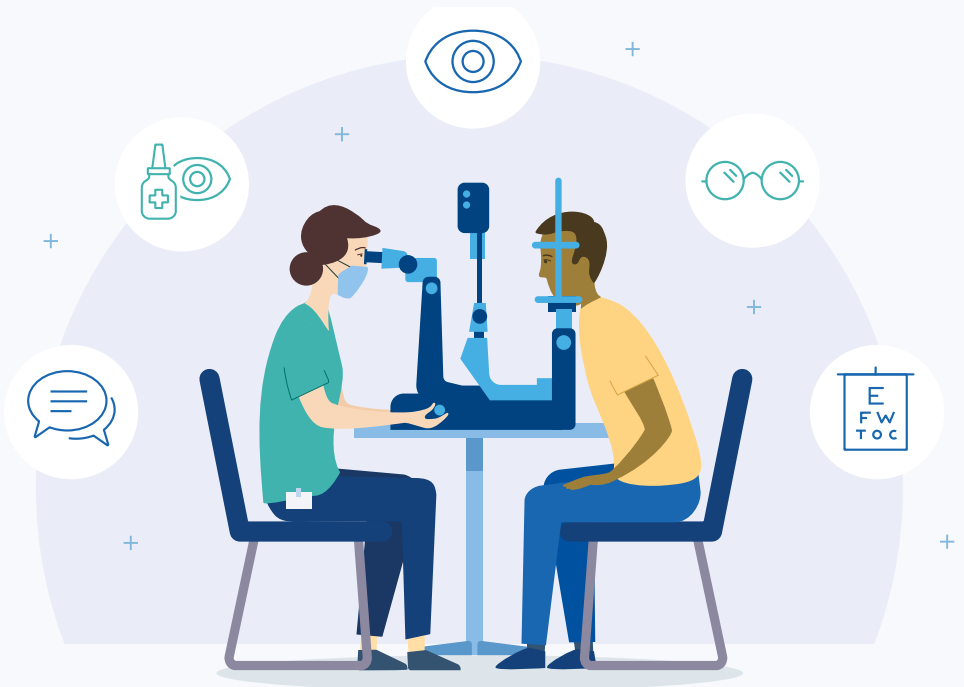


Your guide to free **NHS eye examinations** in Scotland



What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet tells you about your entitlement to NHS eye examinations in Scotland.

All eye examinations are free in Scotland to those ordinarily resident in the UK, refugees, asylum seekers and some eligible overseas visitors.

This is not just to test your sight – it's a thorough examination to:

- check the health of your eyes;
- find any eye problems before they become more serious.

An NHS eye examination can also help identify early signs of other significant health conditions (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and, in rare cases, brain tumours).

If you are a UK resident who is living abroad part-time or are a person who is visiting Scotland, the rules are more complicated. You will need to ask a community optometry practice (opticians) whether you are entitled to a free NHS eye examination.

Where do I get my free NHS eye examination?

You can get your eyes examined for free at any community optometry practice (opticians). You do not need to be referred by your GP – simply contact the practice to book an appointment.

You can find details of your local practice by entering your postcode/area into the [‘Opticians Search Directory’](#) on NHS Inform online.

An eye examination is carried out by an optometrist. An optometrist is a highly skilled health professional who is qualified to treat and manage the majority of eye conditions.

What if I can’t get to an optometry practice (opticians)?

If you’re unable to leave home unaccompanied because of a physical or mental illness or disability, you can arrange to have a home visit.

Contact a community optometry practice (opticians) to make an appointment. Not all practices offer this service. If your preferred practice does not, they will advise you on who to contact.

How often should I get my eyes examined?

You are entitled to a routine NHS eye examination once every 1 or 2 years, depending on your circumstances:

Category of patient	Maximum frequency for routine eye examination
Under 16 years or 60 years and over	Annually
Between 16 years and 59 years	Biennially
Has diabetes	Annually
Sight impaired or severely sight impaired	Annually

What if I have a problem before my next routine eye examination is due?

If you have an eye problem or concern about your vision at any time, you should always phone a community optometry practice (opticians) as your first port of call, and not another healthcare provider such as your GP practice. If there are no optometry practices open and you're concerned about your vision, phone NHS 24 free on 111.

You will be triaged by an optometrist who will ensure you receive the most appropriate treatment for your eye problem. In some cases, you may be referred to another healthcare provider, such as an ophthalmologist in the hospital eye service, if you require specialist treatment.

What happens during the eye examination?

- The optometrist will do various tests and procedures, depending on your needs and symptoms. A sight test will be included to assess your vision.
- Sometimes, the optometrist may not be able to do all the tests and procedures during one appointment or may need to repeat a procedure. If so, they will ask you to come back for a follow-up appointment. You will not have to pay.
- The optometrist may give you eye drops to see inside your eyes more easily. You shouldn't drive immediately afterwards.
- Ask as many questions as you want about your eye examination. If there are any tests or procedures you don't want, tell the optometrist. You can refuse any part of the examination.
- Allow plenty of time for the examination. The eye examination should take about 30 minutes but you may need more time for additional procedures.

There are some additional tests that you may be offered which are not included in the free NHS eye examination and if you wish to have these done you will need to pay. Ask the optometrist for more information about this.

What happens after the eye examination?

- At the end of the examination, the optometrist will discuss the results with you. If there's anything you don't understand, ask.
- The optometrist will give you a copy of your prescription and tell you if you need glasses or contact lenses.
- If you need specialist medical treatment for an eye condition, the optometrist may refer you to the eye department at a hospital. The optometrist will tell you and your GP about this.
- The optometrist will tell you when you should have your next eye examination.

You do not need to return to the same practice for your next routine eye examination; however, you may prefer to for a continuity of care. Each time you visit a new optometrist you will be asked to give your personal details (e.g. your name, address, date of birth, GP's name), details of your own and family's medical history and any other relevant information.

What if I need glasses or contact lenses?

If you require glasses or contact lenses, you can purchase these at any time after you receive your eye examination. **There is no obligation to purchase these at the optometry practice where you had your eye examination.** You can shop around in retailers or online to find the right style and price point.

Generally, you will need to pay for glasses and contact lenses. However, some people may be entitled to help towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses in the form of a NHS optical voucher.

Some people may also be entitled to a NHS optical voucher to help with the cost of repairing or replacing glasses or contact lenses.

To check your eligibility, ask a community optometry practice or search '[Your entitlements to NHS ophthalmic services](#)' on NHS Inform. Further information can also be found via the Scottish Government's '[Help with Health Costs](#)' information booklets. You can download these online or ask the optometrist to print you a copy.

If you're eligible for help, let the optometry practice know. They'll organise your optical voucher and advise what proof you may need to bring.

What if I'm unhappy with the service?

If you are unhappy with the service, first tell the optometrist. If you don't want to do this or are unhappy after speaking to the optometrist, you can make a formal complaint. You should firstly do this directly with the practice through their complaints procedure.

If you remain unhappy, and the complaint is about an NHS service, contact the NHS Board of the optometry practice you visited. You can find these details by searching '[Making a complaint about the NHS](#)' on www.mygov.scot

If your complaint is about a private service (e.g. a private eye examination or supply of glasses/contact lenses), you should contact the [Optical Consumer Complaints Service website](#) for full details on how to make a complaint. Alternatively, for more information you can contact them via telephone on 0344 800 5071, or by email at enquiries@opticalcomplaints.co.uk

How to find out more

If you have any further queries after reading this leaflet, ask the optometrist.

You can find out more information on eye health and eye care services by searching www.eyes.scot or scanning the QR code.



