

Dear Colleague

GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES YOUR GUIDE TO FREE NHS EYE EXAMINATIONS IN SCOTLAND

Summary

1. This letter advises of the publication of a leaflet to raise awareness of the NHS eye examination.

Background

2. A new NHS eye examination was introduced in Scotland on 1 April 2006. To help raise awareness of the NHS eye examination a new patient information leaflet "Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland" has been produced. Supplies of the leaflet have to be distributed to CHPs, GP and optical practices within Board areas.

3. It is important that particular groups in the community, eg older people, especially those in care homes, the visually impaired and those with medical conditions that affect the eye, eg diabetic and glaucoma patients, attend for regular eye examinations. Supplies of the new leaflet have therefore to be sent to CHPs to decide how best to target distribution of leaflets locally to raise awareness of the NHS eye examination with such vulnerable groups.

4. Traditionally, within the NHS, the first point of contact for most patients with an ocular or visual problem has been their GP. With the introduction of the NHS eye examination optometrists/ophthalmic medical practitioners should now be promoted as the first point of contact for patients with eye related problems. A covering letter has been produced to issue with supplies of the leaflet to GP practices which provides information on the NHS eye examination and advice on the management of patients with eye related problems who contact/present at GP practices.

1 October 2007

Addresses

For action
Chief Executives,
NHS Boards

For information
Chief Executive,
NHS National Services Scotland

Director,
Practitioner Services Division

Enquiries to:

Lynne Morrison
1st Floor East
St Andrew's House
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG

Tel: 0131-244 2466

Fax: 0131-244 2326

Email:

Lynne.A.Morrison@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Action

5. Supplies of the leaflet "Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland" are being sent to NHS Boards under separate cover. Further supplies can be obtained from Banner Business Supplies in the normal way. NHS Boards are asked to distribute supplies of the leaflet as follows:

5.1 1,000 to each CHP. CHPs should be advised of the need to target issue of the leaflets at the vulnerable groups identified either directly or via health visitors, district nurses, social workers, home helps, community pharmacies, etc;

5.2 50 to each GP practice together with a copy of the letter to GP practices which is attached to this letter and should be copied locally;

5.3 20 to each optical practice;

in the Board's area.

Yours sincerely

DR JONATHAN PRYCE
Deputy Director

General Medical Practitioners

1 October 2007

Dear General Medical Practitioner

This letter provides information on the NHS eye examination which was introduced on 1 April 2006 and advice on the management of patients with eye problems who contact/present at your practice.

You may be aware that a new NHS eye examination was introduced in Scotland on 1 April 2006 which radically changed the scope of general ophthalmic services. Traditionally, within the NHS, the first point of contact for most patients with an eye problem has been their GP. With the introduction of the NHS eye examination optometrists/Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners (OMPs) should now be promoted as the first point of contact for patients with ocular or vision problems. Every optometrist/OMP in Scotland underwent specific training and accreditation before the introduction of the new NHS eye examination and every practice in Scotland received a grant to ensure that equipment levels were of a uniformly high standard.

Any patients contacting/presenting at your practice with an eye related problem should be advised to attend an optometrist of their choice in the first instance. The optometrist/OMP will undertake an eye examination appropriate to the needs of the patient and manage that patient within their practice, or if the patient's condition requires, refer the patient to you or to an Eye Unit within a hospital.

A new patient information leaflet "Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland" has been produced. An initial supply of the leaflet is enclosed with this letter for display in your practice. It may be helpful to issue the leaflet to patients who present with eye problems. Further supplies can be ordered from your NHS Board.

NHS eye examination

The new NHS eye examination was introduced as a result of the previous government's high level commitment to systematically introduce free eye checks for all before 2007. The introduction of this eye examination also delivers one of the recommendations contained in the Review of Eyecare Services in Scotland Interim Report, which was published in October 2005. The aim of the Review of Eyecare Services was to encourage the development of integrated eyecare services to ensure patients receive a good quality and efficient service, in a convenient setting without undue delay in the management of their condition.

The thrust of the new service is to move away from the previous emphasis of a sight test with refraction to broader health aspects. Those ordinarily resident in the UK or those who

are exempt from NHS charges under the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 are entitled to a free NHS eye examination, including sight test, ie refraction, where clinically required.

For many patients, the most effective pattern of care might not involve refraction within a needs driven, comprehensive “health” examination.

Defining the NHS eye examination in this way allows the optometrist/OMP to tailor the examination to match the symptoms and needs of the individual patient, taking into account their history and symptoms, rather than being prescriptive and including tests, eg routine refractions, which are not clinically required.

It may be that not every test or procedure required by a patient can be carried out during one visit to the practice and it may be necessary for a second visit consisting of repeat procedures. Examples of the latter include:

- cycloplegic refraction;
- repeat procedures such as visual fields and applanation tonometry;
- external eye disease follow up
- referral refinement.

It is estimated that some 20% of patients may fall into this category. Under the new service repeat examinations are also provided free of charge to those ordinarily resident in the UK or those who are exempt from NHS charges under the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Scotland) Regulations 1989.

The initial eye examination is defined as a primary eye examination and the follow up/repeat examination is defined as a supplementary eye examination.

The primary eye examination includes an eye health assessment appropriate to a patient’s needs and symptoms and includes core tests and procedures, which have to be undertaken as part of every primary eye examination, as well as patient specific procedures, eg based on presenting signs and symptoms, age and condition. There continue to be certain procedures that fall outwith the scope of the new eye examination, eg occupational tests, DVLA acuity and visual fields, shared care/co-management schemes, contact lenses etc.

The re-defined eye examination:

- allows patients to receive, free of charge, an appropriate health assessment of their whole visual system which does not have to include a refraction unless this is clinically required;
- gives optometrists/OMPs the professional freedom to perform the test that are appropriate to the patients’ symptoms and needs;
- allows the management of a wide range of common conditions in the community;
- promotes optometrists/OMPs as the first point of contact for eye problems;
- significantly reduces inappropriate referrals to secondary care.

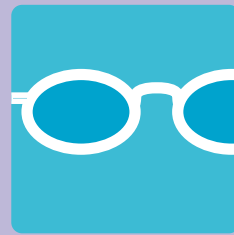
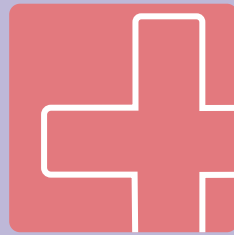
Direct referral to an ophthalmic hospital

From 1 April 2006 optometrists/OMPs have been able to directly refer patients with relevant conditions to an Eye Unit within a hospital. Optometrists/OMPs are therefore no longer required to refer patients to GPs for onward referral to ophthalmic hospitals. However, where an optometrist/OMP refers a patient directly to a hospital they have to inform the patient's doctor or GP practice that he/she has done so.

Yours sincerely

JONATHAN PRYCE
Deputy Director

Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland



What is this leaflet about?

- If you are a UK resident, you can get a free NHS eye examination in Scotland.
- This eye examination is different to eye tests you may have had before. It is not just to test your sight – it's a more thorough examination to check the health of your eyes, and to look for signs of other health problems. It means that any problems you have with your eyes can be found before they become more serious.
- This leaflet tells you about your free NHS eye examination.

If you are a UK resident living abroad part time, or you are a visitor to Scotland, the rules are more complicated. You will need to ask at your opticians if you can get a free NHS eye examination.

Where do I get my free NHS eye examination?

- You can get your eyes examined free of charge by any optometrist in Scotland who provides NHS services.

An optometrist is someone who is trained to examine your eyes to look for signs of eye disease and to check your sight.

- Most high street opticians have an optometrist who provides NHS services.

Does my GP need to refer me?

- No! If you have any problems with your eyes, make an appointment with an optometrist. You can do this without visiting your GP.

What happens during the eye examination?

- During the examination, your optometrist will do a number of different tests and procedures, depending on what your needs and symptoms are. You may be given eye drops to make it easier for your optometrist to see inside your eyes. And you may also have a sight test if your optometrist thinks you need one. You won't be charged for any part of the examination.
- Sometimes, it may not be possible to do all of the tests and procedures during one appointment. If this is the case, you will be asked to come back for a second appointment. There will be no charge for this.
- Ask as many questions as you want about your eye examination. If there are any tests or procedures you don't want to be done, tell your optometrist. You can refuse any part of the examination.

What happens after the eye examination?

- At the end of the examination, your optometrist will discuss the results with you.
- If you have had a sight test, you will be given a copy of your prescription for glasses, if you need them. The rules about paying for new glasses haven't changed – you may still have to pay for them.
- If you need medical treatment for an eye condition you may be referred to the eye department at a hospital. Your GP will be told about this.
- Ask your optometrist if there's anything you don't understand.

How often should I get an NHS eye examination?

- Your optometrist should tell you when your next NHS eye examination is due.
- It will depend on your age, your family history, and if you have any eye problems.
 - If you're under 16, or you're 60 or over, you can have a free NHS eye examination once a year, if needed.
 - If you're between 16 and 59, you can have a free NHS eye examination once every two years, if needed.
- If you have problems with your eyes, you may have to attend for more regular eye examinations. Your optometrist will tell you if you need to come back more often.

Do I need to see the same optometrist each time?

- No. You can make an appointment with any optometrist who provides NHS services. You may prefer to see the same optometrist each time if you think this will be better for your care.
- Each time you visit a new optometrist, you will be asked to give:
 - your personal details (for example, your name, address, date of birth, and GP's name)
 - details about your own and your family's medical history
 - details of any symptoms you are having, and
 - any other relevant information.

Are there any eye tests that aren't included in the free NHS eye examination?

- Yes, there are certain types of tests and procedures that are not done as part of the free NHS eye examination.
- Ask your optometrist for more information about this.

What if I'm not happy?

- If you're not happy with the service you are given, tell your optometrist.
- If you don't want to, or you're still not happy after you've done this, you can make a complaint. The leaflet **Making a complaint about the NHS** explains how to do this. You can get the leaflet from most places where you get NHS care, or at www.hris.org.uk.

How to find out more

- Ask your optometrist for more information, or contact:
 - the NHS Helpline on **0800 22 44 88**, or
 - your local citizens advice bureau (find your nearest bureau on the internet at www.cas.org.uk or in your local phone book).

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and large print formats and in community languages, please contact:

اس دستاویز کی مزید کاپیاں آڈیو کیسٹ پر اور بڑے حروف کی چھپائی میں اور کیسٹی میں
زبانوں میں طلب کیے جانے پر دستیاب ہیں، برائے مہربانی اس پتہ پر رابطہ کریں:

এই ডকুমেন্ট-এর (দলিত) অডিওর কপি, অডিও এবং বড়ো ছাপার অন্যান্য আকারে এবং
সম্প্রদায়িক জোর ভাষায় অনুরোধের মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যাবে, অনুরোধ করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

Gheibhear lethbhreacan a bharrachd ann an cruth
ris an èistear, ann an clò mòr agus ann an cànan
coimhearsnachd. Cuir fios gu:

इस दस्तावेज़/कागज़ात की और प्रतियाँ, माँगे जाने पर, ऑडियो
टैप पर और बड़े अक्षरों में तथा कम्प्यूनिटी भाषाओं में मिल
सकती हैं, कृपया संपर्क करें:

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼/ਕਾਗਜ਼ਾਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਰ ਕਾਪੀਆਂ, ਮੰਗੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ,
ਅੱਡਿਓ ਟੇਪ ਉੱਪਰ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਕੰਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ
ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

此文件有更多備份，如果需要，語音版本和大字體版
本及少數種族語言版本也可提供，請聯絡：

يمكن أن تطلب النسخ الأخرى من هذا المستند كالتسجيل الصوتي والخط الكبير
ونسخ بلغات أخرى، يرجى الإتصال على:

Aby otrzymać niniejszy dokument w innej wersji językowej, na kasecie
lub w wersji z powiększonym drukiem, prosimy o kontakt:

Telephone 0131 244 2631

This information is available on the Scottish Executive website
at www.scotland.gov.uk and on the NHS 24 website at
www.nhs24.com.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE