

How do eyes work?



The eye is like a camera. It lets light in through the cornea, which is like a camera's aperture. The amount of light allowed in is controlled by the pupil, which opens and closes a bit like a shutter. The light focuses on the retina, which sends the image to the brain, acting as film would in order to record the light (the photo itself).

Other eye structures support the main activity of sight: some carry fluids (such as tears and blood) to lubricate or nourish the eye. Others are muscles that allow the eye to move. Some protect the eye from injury (such as the lids and the epithelium of the cornea). And some are messengers, sending sensory information to the brain (such as the pain-sensing nerves in the cornea and the optic nerve behind the retina)¹.

Eat right for good sight

- Eat orange-coloured fruit and vegetables rich in carotenoids
- Lycopene in tomatoes is another carotenoid that enhances eye function
- Fill up on lutein-rich foods, such as green beans, avocados, peppers, apricots, pumpkin and green leafy vegetables
- Vitamin C-rich berries, kiwi, peppers and citrus fruit will support collagen production and reduce the risk of glaucoma
- Macular degeneration is often linked with arterial disease – follow tips for a healthy heart and your eyes will benefit too!²



1. The Eyecare Trust www.eye-care.org.uk
2. Eating for Health, Sarah Kirkham (2007).

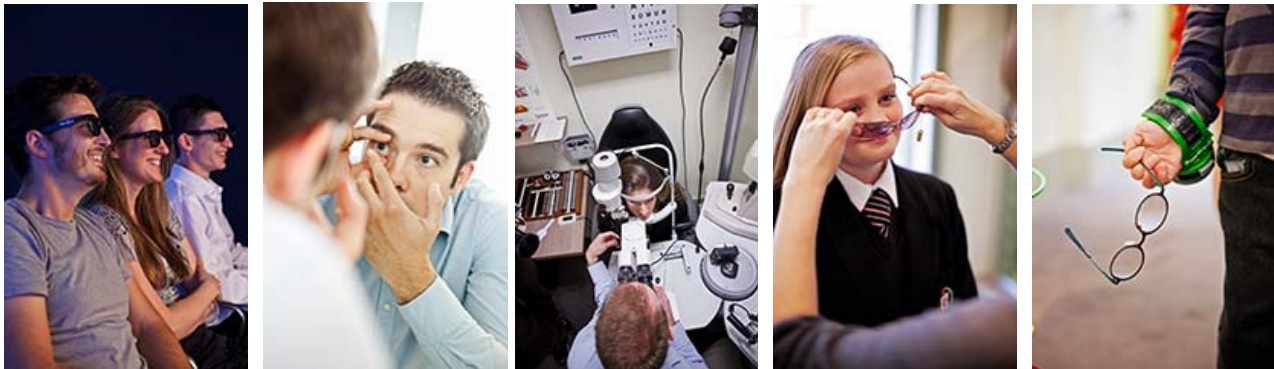


Eye facts and figures

1. 100 people start to lose their sight in the UK every day, half of which could have been prevented through regular sight testing and early treatment¹.
2. Every 15 minutes someone in the UK begins to lose their sight².
3. Up to 1 million children in the UK currently have an undetected vision problem³.
4. Over 90% of children visit a dentist regularly⁴, whilst only 53% of children have ever had an eye examination⁵.
5. In the UK there are currently around 2 million people with sight loss. It is predicted that by 2050 the numbers of people with sight loss in the UK will double to nearly 4 million⁶.
6. Sight loss is expensive - in 2008 an estimated £22 billion was associated with it - in treatment-related costs, indirect costs such as informal care, and 'quality of life' costs such as financial hardship and depression⁷.
7. Department of Health figures show that over 4 million older people do not have regular eye tests, so their potential sight problems are not being identified or treated.

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1. RNIB <http://www.rnib.org.uk/ABOUTUS/ABOUTSIGHTLOSS/Pages/aboutsightloss.aspx> (figures accessed 2010).
 2. Based on 2003 registration levels. The drop in registration is unexplained as prevalence of sight loss appears to be increasing. RNIB is working on figures for the numbers of people diagnosed each day in the UK with the four leading causes of blindness. We believe this will be a more representative picture than registration figures.
 3. Statistics provided by the Eyecare Trust and based on DCSF 2009 School Census 0-12 year olds.
 4. IPSOS report 'Healthy Sight' commissioned by Transitions Optical (2009).
 5. Johnson and Johnson Vision Care Survey (2009).
 6. 'Future sight loss UK: The economic impact of partial sight and blindness in the UK adult population' and RNIB 'GPs and Optometrists: attitudes to eye health' (2010).
http://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/Research/reports/eyehealth/Pages/eye_health.aspx
 7. 'Future sight loss UK: The economic impact of partial sight and blindness in the UK adult population' and RNIB 'GPs and Optometrists: attitudes to eye health' (2010).
http://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/Research/reports/eyehealth/Pages/eye_health.aspx

Looking for an image and expert comment on an eye-related topic?



Contact Anne Grenyer, AOP PR Manager, on 020 7401 5316 or annegrenyer@aop.org.uk

What is an optometrist?

Optometrists test sight and prescribe and dispense spectacles and contact lenses. They are university and post-graduate trained to recognise disease and abnormality in the eye. Optometrists are regulated by the General Optical Council (GOC) to ensure patient safety and high standards of patient care.

Eye care is currently delivered by some 15,000 optometrists and dispensing opticians operating in over 7,000 practices ranging from major high street companies to smaller independent providers, as well as in-hospital eye departments. Optometrists are eye health professionals and the services they provide are far wider than a simple test to determine whether spectacles or contact lenses are required to correct vision. An eye test is not just about getting a pair of glasses – it is a vital health check for your eyes.

A sight test includes (by regulation) a number of other health tests. Many conditions can be detected: glaucoma, cataract, diabetes, age-related macular degeneration (the commonest cause of blindness in the UK), some forms of cancer, as well as some conditions not usually associated with eyes, such as high blood pressure and brain tumours.

- In the year to 31 March 2009, a total of 19.9 million sight tests were carried out in the UK¹.
- According to the GOC, there were a total of 11,559 registered optometrists in the UK at the end of 2008 (rising from 11,094 in 2007)².

Is an optometrist the same as an optician?

The term 'optometrist' came into use in 1987 to replace 'ophthalmic optician' in the same way that 'pharmacist' replaced 'chemist'. An optician can be ophthalmic, dispensing or manufacturing; it is the optometrist who is qualified to test your eyes. Some dispensing opticians have extra qualifications that enable them to fit contact lenses and carry out certain clinical tests.

The Association of Optometrists

Formed in 1946, the Association of Optometrists (AOP) represents individual optometrists in negotiations with government and other organisations. It also promotes the profession and development of high professional and clinical standards. Find out more: www.aop.org.uk

Optical Confederation - The voice of UK optics

The Optical Confederation – The voice of UK optics was launched in April 2010 to bring together the voices of the five representative bodies within the optical profession to speak with a united voice for patients, professionals and the sector. The Confederation is committed to greater cohesion for the five optical bodies: the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO); The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM); the Association of Optometrists (AOP); the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO).

The Government and the optical professions within and associated with the Optical Confederation are all signatories to the UK Vision Strategy to ensure eye health for all. This strategy sets out how eye care services can be improved and was developed in response to the World Health Assembly VISION 2020 resolution, to eliminate avoidable sight loss by the year 2020. Find out more:

www.vision2020uk.org.uk/UKVisionstrategy/

1. General Ophthalmic Services: Activity Statistics for England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2009 - The Information Centre (2009)
2. General Optical Council Annual Report 2008-09

Geoff Roberson - Professional Adviser, Association of Optometrists



Geoff Roberson is an optometrist and worked in private practice for more than 13 years before becoming Director of the Institute of Optometry. Since leaving the Institute Geoff has combined part-time community practice with pre and post registration training, other professional consultancies, expert witness and professional adviser roles as well as Acting Chief Executive of the College of Optometrists. Geoff has considerable experience as an expert witness and as Professional Adviser in court actions as well as NHS and GOC disciplinary processes. As the AOP's Professional Adviser, Geoff's work includes taking a lead on primary care matters and giving support and guidance to Local Optical Committees. Geoff is also Training Adviser to the Directorate of Optometric Continuing Education and Training (CET) and writes and lectures on a wide variety of optometric topics.

Karen Sparrow - Education Advisor, Association of Optometrists



Karen Sparrow started her career as a high street optometrist, moving into practice management and regional training. She became Professional Services Manager at Vision Express, focusing on graduate recruitment and pre-registration training and CET provision. Now at the AOP, Karen supports and mentors students and professionals across the country, in her role as Education Advisor, whilst also working part-time as a locum optometrist in clinical practice. Karen also volunteers for Vision Aid Overseas and has just returned from Zambia where she has been leading a team of optometrists training nurses to do eye tests in regional hospitals as well as running outreach eye clinics in rural areas and providing spectacles for those in need. Karen has been involved with the AOP Children's Vision campaigns since early 2009 and as an experienced optometrist she has been testing children's eyes for more than 20 years.

Ed Bickerstaffe - Optometrist and AOP Board Member



Ed Bickerstaffe is an optometrist currently working for a small multiple in the West Country. In his time Ed has worked for various high street opticians, a laser eye surgery provider and also spent two years testing people in their own homes who couldn't get to the opticians on their own. Ed is on the Board of Directors of the Association of Optometrists and Joint Chair of the Optical Confederation Education Committee. Locally he is a member of the Avon Local Optical Committee representing Optometrists working in the former Avon area in matters regarding NHS contracted work.



29 April 2010

**New confederation launched as a strong united voice for excellence in UK optics:
*Optical Confederation - The voice of UK optics***

A new optical confederation has been launched to bring together the voices of the five representative bodies within the optical profession to speak with a united voice for patients, professionals and the sector. Launched on 29 April 2010, the **Optical Confederation – The voice of UK optics** is committed to greater cohesion for the five optical bodies: the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO); The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM); the Association of Optometrists (AOP); the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO).

In a historic naming ceremony at the InterContinental Hotel in London, John Fried, Deputy Master of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, unveiled the Confederation's plans for the future. Mr Fried said: "The five bodies, ABDO, ACLM, AOP, FMO and FODO all stand for excellence in different parts of our optics family. They all want their members to make the best of their talents and provide the very best care for patients - the people who rely on each part of the optics process to ensure they receive eye care, optical correction and many avoid preventable blindness. It is the most productive way of ensuring that we protect patients' interests, grow the sector, improve scope of practice and ensure that we are listened to."

Ends

Video footage and high resolution images of the event are available on request. For more information, including interview requests, please contact Anne Grenyer, PR Manager at the Association of Optometrists, email: annegrenyer@aop.org.uk or telephone: 020 7401 5316.

Notes to Editors

Association of British Dispensing Opticians

The Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) represents over 5,300 qualified dispensing opticians in the UK (400 overseas), some 2,000 students worldwide and over 400 Associate members. ABDO was formed in 1986 when its two predecessors, The Association of Dispensing Opticians and the Faculty of Dispensing Opticians, were merged following the Health and Social Security Act of 1984.

The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers

The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM) was established in 1962 to publicise the work of UK manufacturers, to develop new products and to raise standards. Since then the scale and diversity of contact lens manufacturing has grown exponentially, the marketplace has become international, and the commercial pressures have become increasingly diverse. Today the ACLM represents the manufacturers of the overwhelming majority of all prescription contact lenses and lens care products in the UK.

Association of Optometrists

Formed in 1946, the Association of Optometrists (AOP) represents, promotes and protects its members in the provision of eye care and associated services. The AOP campaigns to remove barriers that prevent patients accessing eye care including over-restrictive regulations, the under-funding of the NHS sight test and insufficient primary eye care provision in England and Northern Ireland.

Federation of Manufacturing Opticians

The Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) represents ophthalmic optical companies involved in all aspects of manufacturing, importing and wholesaling spectacles. The FMO acts as a forum for the industry, receiving the views of its members and disseminating information and working with Government departments, in particular the Medical Devices Agency.

Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians

The Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO) represents registered opticians in business. FODO members include the national and international high street and supermarket brands, regional and family companies, mobile domiciliary providers and individual opticians. FODO members aim to achieve eye health for all, delivered through world-class services, provided by regulated community-based professionals operating in a competitive environment.

Full speech by John Fried, Deputy Master of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers:

“Good afternoon. I am John Fried, the Deputy Master of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (SMC).

The Worshipful Company could accurately be described as the parent of the five organisations that have brought us here today, and indeed of others including the General Optical Council (GOC). We were the first optical regulator in the UK and one of the first in the world. In fact, the Master retains powers that the GOC could only aspire to. Who else has the power to destroy sub-standard spectacles as they feel fit, or to flog inadequate apprentices? I had better stop before the GOC get ideas.

The five bodies, ABDO, ACLM, AOP, FMO and FODO, all stand for excellence in different parts of our optics family. They all want their members to make the best of their talents and provide the very best care for patients - the people who rely on each part of the optics process to ensure they receive eye care, optical correction and many avoid preventable blindness.

That won't happen without excellent diagnostic equipment; well made frames; high quality lenses; technically advanced contact lenses; excellent distribution; thorough examinations by optometrists; expert contact lens fitting; and skilful and personal dispensing.

These are the ingredients of a journey of care, quality and excellence, in which we all play an essential and professional part.

That's why joint working between the five representative bodies comes so naturally. Of course it isn't without its tensions and its setbacks, but for patients and for the members the five bodies represent, it is the only way that makes sense. It is the most productive way of ensuring that we protect patients' interests, grow the sector, improve scope of practice and ensure that we are listened to.

Joint committees have now been in operation for 18 months and, again, there has been a hiccup or two. Some committees are oversubscribed; some have taken time to find their feet, and some have brought new and unfamiliar ways of working. But I don't think anyone would go back to the old days of

each body deciding on its view without consultation, acting unilaterally and then fighting it out against all-comers?

So, to mark this change, taking the next step of creating an identity and personality is now necessary. It doesn't change the realities or dynamics of any of the organisations who retain their autonomy and leadership roles. What it does is to provide new opportunities for the profession, for businesses and industry and above all for patients.

So this is one of those rare but truly historic moments for eye health and eye care in the UK and it is with the greatest pleasure that I now launch the new name and the new identity. Can I ask us all to raise our glasses and drink a toast to the Optical Confederation - The voice of UK optics."



Association of British
Dispensing Opticians



The Association
of Contact Lens
Manufacturers



ASSOCIATION OF
OPTOMETRISTS



FMO
Focus on Optics
Est. 1917



Federation of Ophthalmic
and Dispensing Opticians