

March 2025

Benefits News



What to Expect at Your Eye Exam

This document is part of the PEBB March Newsletter, Taking Care of Your Vision. To access other resources, visit the [News and Events](#) page.



Many people think their eyesight is just fine. They don't realize they may need glasses or contact lenses. According to the CDC, about 11 million Americans over the age of 12 need vision correction. But that's just one reason to get your eyes examined. Like any health checkup, regular eye exams are also critical. They detect eye and other diseases early — sometimes before you have symptoms.

Prioritize your vision health as an important part of your overall health and wellness. The best way to do that is to stay on top of routine eye exams. All PEBB vision plans cover routine vision exams once a year with an optometrist. You pay a small copay. If you have vision coverage through PEBB, be sure to take advantage of this benefit each year. Annual eye exams will help you maintain good eye health and protect your vision as you age.

Ready to schedule the appointment? Here's an overview of what you can expect once you get there.

Before the Exam



Think about how your eyes have been doing lately. Have you noticed any eye problems? This may include blurry vision, flashes of light, poor night vision, or others. Do you want new glasses or lens enhancements? Have you had any recent health issues that your doctor should know about? This information will help your optometrist to understand your current situation.



Consider what questions you have about your vision. You may want to know if anything about your eyes has changed since your last visit. You may also want to know what you can do to improve your vision or take better care of your eyes.



If you have glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contacts, bring them to the exam.



Bring a list of current medications so your optometrist can determine if any of them could be affecting your vision. It can also be helpful to bring information about your primary care provider.



If you know you'll get your pupils dilated, bring a friend to drive you home, too!



Retinal Screening

Your optometrist can also perform a retinal screening. This test creates a high-quality digital image of the inner, back surface of your eye. This allows your optometrist to detect additional eye conditions. These include diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and macular degeneration.

Even if you're not having any eye issues, this screening can give your optometrist a baseline of your retinal health. This is helpful to have if issues come up later.

PEBB vision plans cover routine retinal screening for a small copay.

During the Exam

- Your optometrist will likely start by asking questions about your vision. This includes any changes or issues you've noticed lately and any recent medical events or life changes.
- The first part of the exam is focused on how your eyes work. Your optometrist will also look at how your eyes appear on the outside.
 - The most common way to check your vision is using a Snellen chart. It's the chart with big black letters at the top. Each row of letters gets progressively smaller.
 - You'll be asked to sit in front of a device called a phoropter. This device contains lenses in varying strengths. Your optometrist will try out different lenses as you again read the letters on the Snellen chart. Your optometrist may ask you to compare which lens options are clearer. (This part of the exam is called refraction testing.)
 - Your optometrist will also check how well your pupils respond by shining a light in each eye.
 - Another test is to check the fluid pressure inside your eye. High pressure can indicate an issue like glaucoma.
 - Your optometrist may also check if your eyes align properly. This includes checking if they move correctly in all directions without moving your head.
- The next part is focused on examining the inside of your eyes.
 - Before this begins, your optometrist may dilate your pupils. This uses medicated eye drops that relax your eye muscle, so it opens wider. This makes it easier to look inside your eye. Dilation makes your eyes more sensitive to light. Your eyes might need time to recover. Keep this in mind when scheduling your appointment.
 - Your optometrist will closely inspect the different parts of your eye. This includes the cornea, lens, optic nerve, and retina.

After the Exam

- Your optometrist will explain the findings from your exam.
- If you need corrective lenses, your optometrist will give you a paper or digital copy of your prescription.
- If your optometrist finds something more complex, you will receive a referral to an ophthalmologist. This may include showing signs of glaucoma or cataracts.

Next Steps for Corrective Lenses

- If you need corrective lenses, the first thing you'll need to decide is if you want eyeglasses or contacts. The choice is generally up to you. Different choices suit different lifestyles. (For example, if you are very active, you may prefer contacts.) If you need help deciding, your optometrist may run measurements and tests to determine your suitability for corrective lenses. Then, they can point out which glasses and/or contact lens options might work best for you. You may also receive help from an on-staff optician. (Note: Some eye conditions may not allow the use of contacts.) See the [next page](#) for key considerations about eyeglasses or contacts.
- All PEBB vision plans cover frames/lenses or contact lenses each year. Each plan has its own allowance for frames/lenses or contact lenses. Your out-of-pocket costs may be lower for one option than the other. Make sure you work with your provider to figure out the best way to use your benefit.
- Keep in mind: You can take your prescription and shop around for corrective lenses through other providers and retailers. You don't have to get your glasses or contacts through your optometrist.



Key Considerations for Corrective Lenses



Glasses

- There are two main types of lenses:
 1. Single-vision lenses: These correct vision for a single distance. They can correct nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism.
 2. Multifocal lenses: These correct vision at multiple distances. There are different types available (bifocal, trifocal).
- For an additional charge, lens enhancements are available. The costs for these enhancements vary by plan. Lens enhancements include:
 - Standard progressive lenses
 - Premium progressive lenses
 - Custom progressive lenses
 - Anti-glare coating
 - Blue light coating
- There are many options when it comes to frames. This part can be fun! Try on different styles and colors to see what you like best. Keep in mind there is a frame allowance, and prices vary greatly.
- Opticians are trained to assist you in the selection process. They can help determine the proper frame width for your face. Other elements impact fit, such as your nose bridge, ear location, and cheekbones.



Contact Lenses

- Most contacts are soft, disposable lenses that are changed on a regular basis.
- With daily disposables, you put in a new pair of lenses each day. For other types of disposables, you remove them before bed and store them in contact solution overnight. You repeat this until it's time to use a new pair of contacts.
- It can take a while to get used to inserting and removing contact lenses. Your provider will work with you to ensure that you're comfortable.
- If it's your first time getting contact lenses, your optometrist may ask you to return for a follow-up visit. This is to make sure your contacts fit properly and feel comfortable. (Once you order contacts, you can't make returns or exchanges.)

Sources:

- [Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Cleveland Clinic](#)
- [American Optometric Association](#)