

CooperVision®

Eye Care Practice Survival Guide

What now?

coopervision.com | May 2020

To All US Eye Care Professionals:

These are truly unprecedented times that bring multiple challenges to all those engaged in the delivery of eye care. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States changes daily and therefore so does the direction of every eye care practice. We understand that the “new normal” as we see it today may very well be a completely different situation as we recover and go back to business.

At CooperVision, we have always valued partnership and innovation. We are dedicated to applying those values even more now, to help ECPs through these difficult times. All our sales representatives are reaching out to our customers and listening to hear how we can support you and your business.

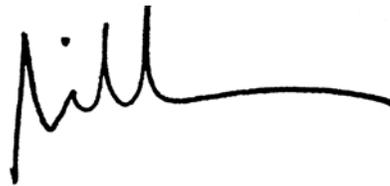
While we are busy creating resources, tools and business strategies to help all eye care professionals across the United States, let’s also start a support network. We are in this together and we will come out of this together.

From all of us at CooperVision, we hope this guide will assist you during this challenging time. We’re here to help.

Sincerely,



Jerry Warner, President
CooperVision Americas



Michele Andrews, OD
Senior Director, Professional & Academic Affairs, North America



Part 1 ...What Now?

Harvard Business Review has studied the strategies of more than 5,000 companies across recessions and downturns. They identified [the common actions which successfully drove continued growth despite prevailing economic headwinds.](#)

1 Act early

For most businesses there was no foresight into this crisis, however acting fast and continuous now will be the difference in businesses that thrive versus just survive or worse, falter.

2 Take a long-term perspective

Eyecare business may be changed in many ways. For true entrepreneurs, moving in innovative and competitive directions will be the key to navigating new opportunity. Think out of the box and keep an eye on the future.

3 Don't give up on growth initiatives

Cutting expenses is a necessary evil in times like these. Many businesses panic and start cutting everything they can. However, HBR discovered that those companies which achieved double-digit returns during downturns and upon recovery, balanced their cost-cutting with revenue growth initiatives like marketing and outreach.

So, what now for an eye care business? The goal of this e-book is to give you actionable checklists and resource links to help you through this challenging time.

Here are 7 topics we will cover in Part 1 of this e-book:

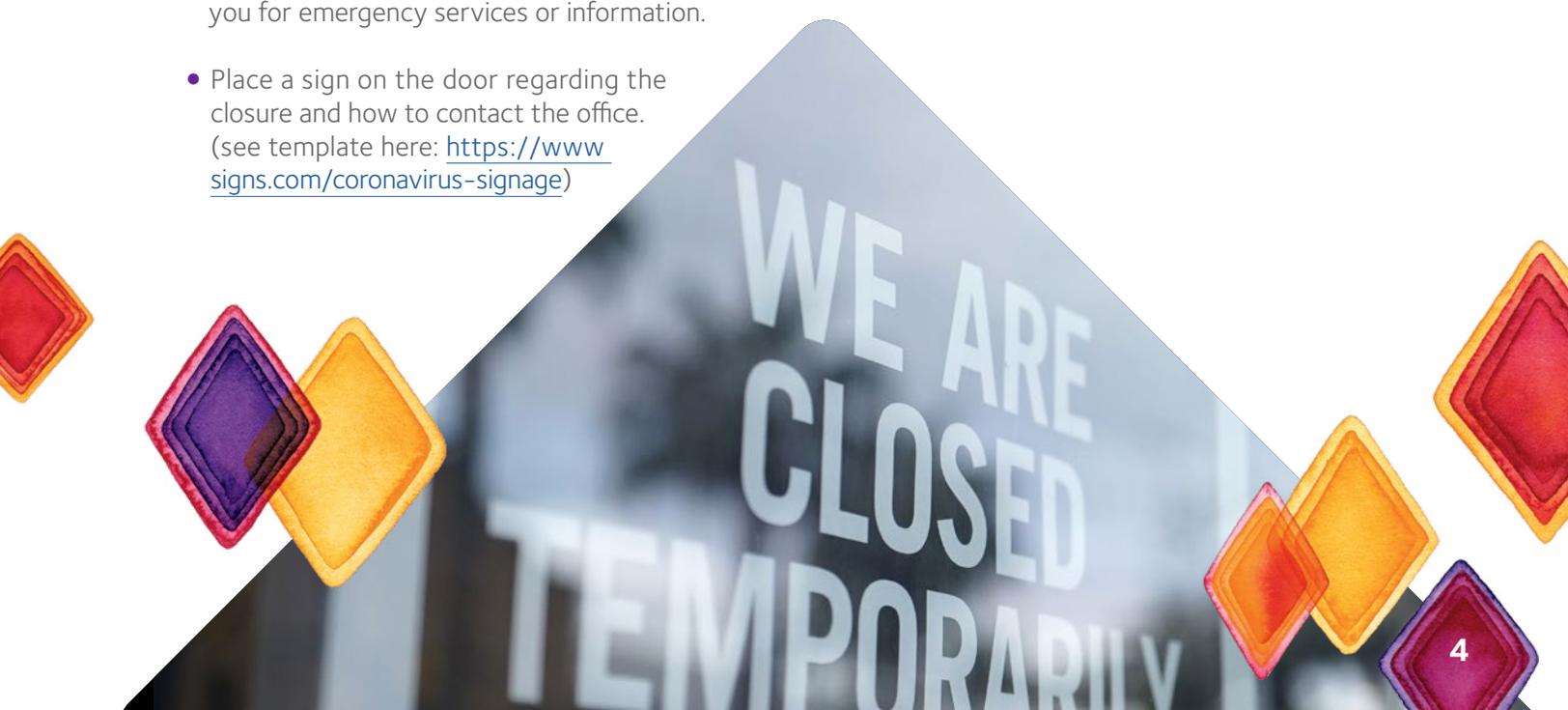
- Closed for regular eye care
- Government, state & industry resources available
- Staff
- Patient communications
- Tele-eyecare options
- E-commerce options
- Take advantage of downtime

Disclaimer: The information contained in this guide is not legal advice. In situations that warrant it; HR, Accounting or Legal advice from licensed experts is suggested.

Closed for regular eye care

Closing down an office is never easy. Ensure the following tasks are completed so patients are aware of the closure and services still available.

- Send an email to all patients communicating current services including contact lens home delivery and emergency eye care.
- Have your marketing agency design and install a “pop up” on the company website letting patients know of closure as well as how to reach the office. Disable appointment booking along with a message to call in for emergency eye care. Give patients easy access to reach you through the website or email. Stop any automated recall software for the time being.
- Build a spreadsheet for tracking cancelled appointments, rescheduled appointments and ones that require follow up once the office is open.
- Create social media posts announcing closure and ongoing posts about current services such as emergency eye care, contact lens online ordering and free shipping of contact lenses, eye drops and replacement eyewear.
- Change your on-hold messaging and voicemail to reflect the closure as well as how to contact you for emergency services or information.
- Place a sign on the door regarding the closure and how to contact the office. (see template here: <https://www.signs.com/coronavirus-signage>)
- Place a sign on the door for patients coming in for emergency services to ensure they are aware of health concerns, COVID-19 symptoms, recent travel, etc. (see template here: <https://www.pinghd.com/free-covid-19-digital-signage-templates>)
- [Request mail hold or mail forwarding](#) to your home from United States Postal Services (free of charge).
- Sterilize the office including all of the frames. Have the carpets cleaned and if staff are still working, have them start a full spring-cleaning initiative.
- Change office hours on door, website, Google My Business and Facebook.
- [Get your workplace ready for business during Covid-19.](#)



WE ARE
CLOSED
TEMPORARILY

Government, provincial & industry resources available

The United States government has been hard at work putting together assistance for individuals and businesses. Here is a list from the government including links to find out more as well as business, association and industry links.

- **Full list of government assistance programs:** <https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus> (updated daily)
- **CARES Act:** <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares>
- **CARES Act for business:** <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/assistance-for-small-businesses>
- **Economic Injury Disaster Loan:** Loan advance of up to \$10,000 <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/assistance-for-small-businesses>
- **Employee layoffs & economic impact payment:** <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>
- **Paycheck protection program:** <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program>
- **Financial assistance per state:** <https://www.zenefits.com/workest/the-big-list-of-covid-19-financial-assistance-programs-for-small-businesses-by-state>
- **Tax deferrals as per IRS:** <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm948>
- **Resources for US businesses:** <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>
- **Chamber of Commerce resource page:** <https://www.uschamber.com/co/small-business-coronavirus>
- **American Optometric Association Resource Page:** <https://www.aoa.org/coronavirus>
- **Opticians Association of America Resource Page:** <https://oaa.org/covid-19-response>
- **INVISION Magazine Resource Page:** <https://invisionmag.com/tag/covid-19>
- **Vision Monday Magazine Resource Page:** <https://www.visionmonday.com/eyecare/coronavirus-briefing/ecp-resources>
- **Senates Relief Bill Specific to Optometry:** <https://www.aoa.org/news/advocacy/pandemic-relief-bill-will-help-optometry-practices-nationwide>
- **Supplier partners.** Many industry suppliers are offering everything from free shipping to deferred payment plans. Reach out directly to your representatives for more information.
- **Office bills.** There's so many...think rent, lease, phone, credit card charges, utilities, software, cleaning/ janitorial and reach out to see what options they are offering companies during this time.



Staff

For eye care practices, this might be the first time they've had to consider having employees work from home or worse yet...laying off some or all of the workforce.

If your employees are still working:

- Communicate – staying connected with phone, text, email or communication platforms like Slack, What's App, Facetime or Skype. Have team meetings using Zoom, Google Hangouts or Microsoft Teams.
- If working from home, give clear direction and expectations on tasks to be completed. Be compassionate for those that have small children and will be trying to manage work and childcare together.
- If you have employees calling to reschedule patients offer to cover their cell phone bill for the month. Ensure your employees have what they need to complete the tasks at hand. Laptop/ PC, access to work email from home, login information for social channels, email platforms and voicemail.
- As the leader display positivity, optimism and hope. Your team will need it more now than they ever have. They will be worried about their jobs, the company and their future. Being at home makes them feel disconnected and vulnerable.

If your employees are coming into the office:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires employers to provide a safe workplace for their employees. At a time like this, many employees may be scared to be on the frontline looking after patients. (https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/additional_resources.html)

It's important to put as many safety measures in place at the office such as:

- Post signs throughout the office on handwashing and good hygiene.
- Ensure employees are aware of symptoms and risk of the virus and permit employees to work from home if not feeling well.
- Post signs on health and safety measures for patients to follow.
- Provide PPE. (personal protective equipment) as indicated (<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>)
- Detail a thorough office sterilization protocol and process especially after each patient.
- Set guidelines for social distancing in the office.
- Set a new list of tasks to complete during this downtime that you normally don't have time for.
Example: inventory count, returns, cleaning and organizing, budgets.

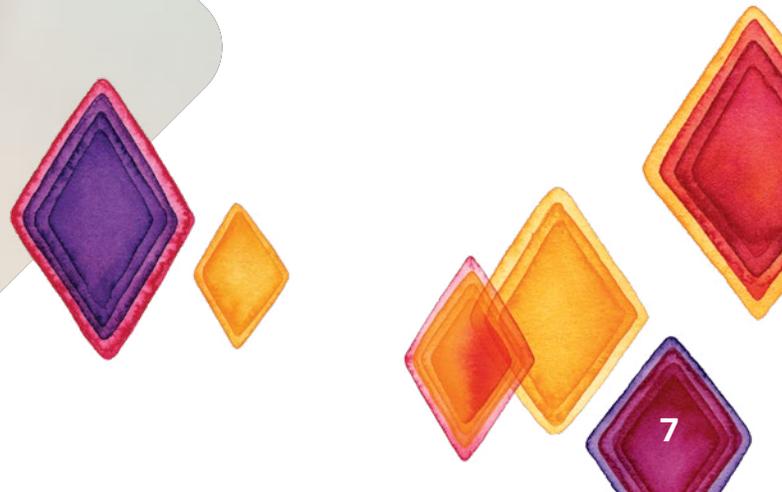
This is a stressful time for employees. If an employee does not want to come to the office, understand your options (always a good idea to consult an HR lawyer if needed).



Keeping in touch with patients

Patient communications during the closure of your office will be extremely important. Not only will it keep patients in the know of what you are currently offering for services but also top of mind when this is over and they are looking for eye care and eyewear services.

- Build an email schedule and content. This is one of those times where more communication is better than less. Patients will not see multiple communications as spam but rather a welcome update from a trusted provider. Plan an email for each stage of the closure such as extended closure dates, reminder of services available and possible reopen date.
- Define emergency services, how to contact for emergency consultation as well as hours of operation.
- Develop a “welcome” email for emergency patients who will be coming to the office detailing symptoms, personal hygiene, office sterilization and patient exam protocol and how the team will interact with the patient upon arrival and during exam.
- Your office has likely already been rescheduling patients for a few months down the road; keep staff busy by trying to book appointments throughout the summer and fall.
- Have your staff call every contact lens and dry eye patient and offer to ship a supply of product to their home.
- Develop a social media strategy that communicates updates, services and new initiatives (i.e.: e-commerce or tele-eyecare).
- Make it super easy for patients to connect with your office. Freely share email addresses, cell phone numbers, where to text, submission forms on website, chat bot on website and voicemail.
- Offer your patients the option to chat via Zoom, Facetime, Google Hangouts, or other video call options.



Tele-medicine options

The information below is directly copied (with permission) from the AOA website.

During the current public health emergency, many health care providers are turning to telehealth to be able to continue to care for their patients as more patients choose to remain home to reduce community spread of COVID-19. It is important for doctors of optometry to understand the current regulatory framework for the provision of telehealth services; potential state limitations; billing and coding responsibilities as well as malpractice considerations. This guide is intended to assist Doctors of Optometry who may need to quickly expand the provision of telehealth-based care during the current COVID-19 public health emergency.

The following information is included in this guide:

- I. Preparing for the use of telehealth-based care
- II. Malpractice insurance considerations
- III. State law impacts
- IV. Medicare changes under COVID-19 public health emergency
- V. Billing and coding considerations
- VI. Medicare telehealth visit coverage summary during COVID-19 public health emergency
- VII. Commercial payer coverage
- VIII. HIPAA related concerns
- IX. Telehealth platform principles to consider during COVID-19 public health emergency
- X. Practice implementation considerations

Additional information on each of the points above can be found on the [AOA website](#).

Telehealth codes:

<https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/Telehealth/Telehealth-Codes>

Medicare Telehealth Webinars:

<https://www.aoa.org/advocacy/webinars>

Tele-Optometry platforms, APPs or software currently available to use in US:

Eyecare Live: <https://eyecarelive.com>

Doxy.me: <https://doxy.me>

Patient consent Template:

https://www.umtrc.org/clientuploads/Resources/Sample%20Forms%20and%20Templates/Sample_Informed_Consent_for_Telemedicine_Services.pdf

Getting set up to sell online

Closure of our practices happened fast and you may not yet have a firm date to re-open. It could be weeks or even months until we are back to what will be a different and new normal. If you have been considering setting up an e-store this might be the exact situation you need to make it happen.

There are a few different options. You can set up an e-store that just sells contact lenses, eye drops, dry eye therapies and sunglasses or you can set up a full e-commerce option that also showcases your frame inventory but directs to instore purchase or at home try on or one that sells complete eyewear online.

For Contact Lenses, Eye Drops, etc.

- **Lensferry:** <http://eyecareprime.com/home/solutions/lensferry>
- **Get Sightly:** <http://getsightly.com>
- **Shopify:** <https://www.shopify.ca>
- **Yourlens.com:** <http://yourlens.com>
- **E-DR.com:** <http://e-dr.com>
- **My Eye Store:** <https://myeyestore.com>

For Eyewear (some include Contact Lenses, Eye Drops, etc.)

- **Opticommerce:** <https://www.opticommerce.co.uk>
- **LiveOptical:** <https://liveoptical.com>
- **Fittingbox:** <https://www.fittingbox.com/en>
- **FramesData:** <https://www.framesdata.com>
- **Optify:** <https://optifyonline.com>

Here is a [webinar from SECO University on many e-commerce options available](#) as well as a downloadable [e-book from Marketing4ecps](#).

All of the above options can be integrated seamlessly into your current practice website. There are several ways to drive traffic to your e-store once it is up and running.

- Email your current patient database
- Sign up all new and existing patients with an account
- Engage your patients via social posts and social ads on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter
- Add pop up and banner advertising on website
- Include digital advertising such as Google AdWords & Google Display ads that capture patients searching for products in your geography
- Promote via YouTube ads & videos
- Referrals

While many analysts have said ecommerce cannot replace all lost foot traffic (especially if consumers hit by curtailed or lost incomes have less money for shopping), it's also true that in the wake of the coronavirus nearly 65% are more likely to head to the internet to buy personal care & health care products, [according to recent data from Red Points](#).



Taking advantage of downtime

While it may be forced downtime, see it as an opportunity to do all things on your “to do list” that you think about but never have time for.

- **Frame inventory.** Reorganize and remerchandise. Get old stock ready for a massive clear out sale upon opening. Package up and ship all returns. Go back through return invoices and ensure credit has been received. Book a virtual sales meeting with your favorite frame rep and do some virtual exchanges and buy some updated product.
- **Contact lens inventory.** This is a great time to go through contact lens inventories and replace missing powers, check for expired product and clean up any returns. It’s also an opportunity to organize contact lens trials, order missing powers and discard expired trials.
- **Full practice inventory count.**
Your accountants will love you!
- **Spring cleaning.** It is spring after all! Set about cleaning, purging, organizing, disinfecting and polishing every room in your office. [Check out this cleaning checklist on Pinterest.](#)
- **Accounts receivable.** Perfect time to review all outstanding invoices, insurance submissions and patient billing.
- **Review business processes.**
Meet with the team and discuss workflow, patient flow, bottlenecks and time-consuming tasks that cause inefficiencies. Brainstorm solutions and develop new strategies.
- **Staff training.** Build a list of 10 staff trainings you have thought about doing and execute one every week for the next 10 weeks. Here are 5 ideas:
 - Increasing Annual Contact Lens Supply Sales
 - Dry Eye & Contact Lens Drop Out – How We Can Alleviate Dry Eye
 - Myopia Management
 - Digital Eye Strain & How to Recommend Products
 - How to Answer the Phone – Basic Telephone Etiquette



8 things CooperVision is doing to help practices now and in the future

For everyone at CooperVision, our values of partnering, and being inventive, friendly and dedicated do not just apply during the best of times, they are even more critical in more challenging times like these. Our teams are examining every area of our business to identify opportunities to support you, mindful that many of you as small business owners are seeking additional resources to support your practices and your contact lens-wearing patients. In turn, CooperVision has instituted the following:

- 1 Continued manufacturing and shipping.**
We are still in production, with full supply. Contact lenses are a medical device, and we understand their importance to your patients in their daily lives.
- 2 Free shipping for direct-to-patient orders.**
CooperVision is now offering free freight for direct-to-patient contact lens delivery of any two boxes or more. The lenses will be shipped to patients via FedEx 2-Day Air or USPS on your behalf, coming from the eye care professional they know and trust. We are also providing reimbursement for Authorized Distributors to participate in this direct-to-patient delivery program; if you work with a distributor, please speak with them for details.

- 3 Modified consumer rebate policies.**
To ensure your patients have enough contact lenses on hand—and to help you continue to drive sales of annual supplies—we have also temporarily modified our rebate policies. If a patient is in need of contact lenses or wants to purchase additional lenses before their supply is up, CooperVision will honor the patient rebate for an early annual supply purchase. And if you would like to extend contact lens prescriptions on a case-by-case basis for patients unable to get to their scheduled annual eye exam or if your office is closed, these patients can still take advantage of the CooperVision patient rebate. In both situations, your office will need to provide the patient with a copy of their last exam, along with proof of purchase of the annual supply. All other terms and conditions still apply.

4 Extended payment terms.

For eligible independent eye care practices in good standing, we are offering extended payment terms on current pending invoices. Given that your cash flow and business processes may be interrupted, we have implemented a 30-day payment extension, which will also apply to all orders placed directly with CooperVision and through our participating Authorized Distributor Network until May 31, 2020.

5 E-commerce contact lens services.

As office closures, limited hours, or emergency-only care hinder your usual services, we understand that you may also be exploring options for online contact lens purchases through your practice. We'd like to remind you that EyeCare Prime, a subsidiary of CooperVision, offers LensFerry—a doctor-friendly e-commerce contact lens service that enables patients to order lenses from your practice 24/7 via text, tablet, or computer, with deliveries directly to their homes.

6 Supporting patient education.

We know your patients have questions about the safety of contact lenses, lens wear and care in relation to COVID-19, and the direct-to-patient shipping process. We're providing answers via our website and social media channels to support your own patient communications.

7 CooperVision customer-facing team.

Although our sales team is operating from home, they are still fully available to help and support you. Reach out to them if you need anything, and they will also be actively reaching out. Our aim is to help in whatever way we can. Customer Service also continues to operate at full strength and are there for you as well at **1-800-341-2020** (press 1 for Customer Service, 3 for service in Spanish, 4 for Consultation Support).

8 Continuous Communication.

You will continue to hear from us but please feel free to reach out to us through your sales representative or to our customer service team. We are committed to supporting you in any way we can. Together, we will get through this.

Our thoughts are with you and the many people in your lives—professional and personal.

As developments occur, we will keep you informed. Speaking for everyone at CooperVision US and the thousands of CooperVision employees worldwide, we are committed to supporting you in any way we can. Please help us start a trend of support and unity by using the hashtag **#Save2020Eyecare**.

CooperVision's Best Practices honorees will be presenting Best Practices for Reopening your Practices, an educational webinar series. To learn more about the webinar series, visit coopervision.ecp-viewpoints.com.