

PRIMARY CARE OPTOMETRY *NI PEARS* ACUTE EYECARE SERVICE

INFORMATION FOR GP PRACTICES

NI PEARS is a regional service provided by community optometrists for patients who develop an **acute (new and sudden or very recent onset) eye problem**

e.g. sudden red, painful or sticky eye, sudden flashes & floaters, sudden reduction in vision, something in the eye that the patient cannot remove. These patients may be directed to a local optometrist for investigation and management of their condition.

- Optometry appointment should be provided within 48 hours
- Patient’s condition will be investigated and either managed by the optometrist or, if more serious, an appropriate onward referral will be made.
- Patients deemed by the optometrist as not suitable for NIPEARS will be given appropriate advice on how else they may have their condition managed.

For more information on NI PEARS and emergency eye care *click on link [Eyecare Services Information](#)*

****IMPORTANT: NOT ALL PATIENTS ARE SUITABLE FOR NIPEARS****

TRIAGE QUESTIONS: IS NI PEARS APPROPRIATE FOR A PATIENT?

IMPORTANT: IF THE PATIENT HAS AN OCULAR EMERGENCY THEY SHOULD BE REFERRED DIRECTLY TO EYE CASUALTY OR THE NEAREST A & E DEPARTMENT IN LINE WITH OPHTHALMOLOGY REFERRAL GUIDANCE

Q1: HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD THE EYE PROBLEM - IS IT SUDDEN OR VERY RECENT ?

YES
↓

NO
↓

Q2: HAVE YOU HAD A SIMILAR CONDITION BEFORE?

YES
↓

NO →

DIRECT PATIENT TO THE OPTOMETRIST FOR ADVICE ON HOW THEIR PROBLEM CAN BE MANAGED

Q3: ARE YOU ALREADY ATTENDING A HOSPITAL EYE CLINIC* *REMEMBER YOU CAN CHECK THIS ON NIECR

YES
↓


NO →

CONTACT RELEVANT HOSPITAL EYE SERVICE

OPTOMETRIST WILL DECIDE IF PATIENT SUITABLE FOR NI PEARS

X IF NOT SUITABLE FOR NIPEARS OPTOMETRIST WILL ADVISE PATIENT ON THE MOST APPROPRIATE CARE.

NI PEARS PROTOCOLS

 PATIENTS / SYMPTOMS /CONDITIONS NOT SUITABLE FOR NI PEARS	
X	Ocular Emergencies – contact Eye Casualty or A & E
X	Acute Headaches with no visual/eye related symptoms – for GP management or A&E if patient is very unwell Chronic headaches previously investigated by the optometrist, with no ocular cause found, require GP management.
X	Children Under 5yrs – for GP management or Eye Casualty / A&E if very urgent
X	Previously diagnosed or chronic eye conditions - e.g. dry eye, blepharitis contact optometrist or hospital eye clinic for advice

KEY ADVICE FOR PATIENTS BEING DIRECTED TO THE OPTOMETRIST FOR POSSIBLE NIPEARS ASSESSMENT

- If the patient has new, acute (sudden or very recent onset) ocular symptoms advise them to contact their own, or a local, optometry practice for further advice on how to manage their condition and advise them that they may be offered an NI PEARS examination if it is the most appropriate care for them OR contact the optometry practice directly on the patient's behalf.

Most optometry practices across NI now provide NIPEARS. If the practice does not they will direct the patient to the nearest NIPEARS practice.

- Advise the patient that the Optometrist will decide how soon they need to be seen and, while it may not be immediately, if their condition is acute and the optometrist decides an NIPEARS assessment is required it should be provided within 48 hours.
- Please **DO NOT** tell the patient that they will automatically be seen free of charge. If the patient is not eligible for NIPEARS or a GOS sight test there may be a charge.

For further advice please contact HSCB Ophthalmic Services at ophthalmic.services@hscni.net