

**NORTHERN IRELAND PRIMARY EYECARE ASSESSMENT & REFERRAL
SERVICE**

NI PEARS

For Information for GP practices and Community Pharmacists

OPTOMETRIC LED ACUTE EYECARE SERVICE

**PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH ALL GPs, PRACTICE
MANAGERS, COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS AND
STAFF IN YOUR PRACTICE / PHARMACY**

This service is an HSC funded optometric primary eye care intervention service for patients across Northern Ireland presenting with **acute (sudden or very recent onset) eye problems**.



NI PEARS
Primary Eyecare Assessment
and Referral Service

You may now refer patients presenting with a new and acute (sudden or recent onset) eye condition to an accredited optometrist for assessment.

The optometrist will provide an appointment within 48 hours and will investigate and either manage the patient, if it is a minor non-sight threatening condition, or triage them for appropriate onward referral if more serious and potentially sight threatening.

**Click on the link below to see the list of optometric practices providing
NI PEARS.**

<http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/eyes/>

Please note that patients may self-refer into the service or be referred by their GP, practice nurse, surgery receptionist or Community Pharmacist. Patients may be referred to any of the listed optometry practices. If they already attend one of these optometry practices they should be encouraged to attend their own practice.

Who can access the service?

NI PEARS REFERRAL Patient Eligibility – INCLUSIONS

The following patients may be referred for an NI PEARS assessment to a participating optometry practice

1) **Patients presenting with new sudden, or very recent onset, of acute eye related symptoms e.g. red eye, painful eye, sudden loss or disturbance of vision, sudden onset of flashes and floaters.**

AND

2) **Patients must have a current Health and Care Number (HCN).**

Who cannot access the service?

NI PEARS REFERRAL Patient Eligibility – EXCLUSIONS

The following patients are **NOT eligible** for referral to an accredited optometrist for an NI PEARS Assessment:

- 1) **Ophthalmic conditions requiring immediate, urgent referral to HES**. For example: acute trauma, penetrating eye injury, chemical burn, orbital cellulitis. Patients with these ophthalmic conditions should be referred to secondary care immediately in line with Eye Casualty protocols.
- 2) **Headaches unless associated with sudden onset visual changes** - patients presenting with headaches may be entitled to a General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) sight test, if eligible. Please note eligibility will depend on when the patient last had a GOS test and if the time interval is as recommended in Department of Health intervals for GOS Sight Tests – the optometrist should be able to advise on this. If the patient is not eligible for GOS or NI PEARS the optometrist will have to charge the patient for a private sight test or, advise the patient to attend their GP.
- 3) **Patients with long term/chronic ophthalmic conditions**, for example: previously diagnosed diabetic retinopathy, long standing diplopia, long standing/previously investigated dry eye or blepharitis, unless the presenting sudden onset symptoms are for something unrelated to their chronic condition. This service is only for assessment of patients with acute, sudden onset conditions.
- 4) **Children under 5 years old**. These patients presenting with an acute eye condition must be seen either by their GP or the hospital eye service.

For further information or any queries about the new service please contact any of the HSCB optometric advisers:

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