

Vision Insurance 101

What Is Vision Insurance?

Vision coverage is similar to regular medical insurance and is one of the voluntary benefit options commonly offered through employers. When you have vision insurance, you pay a premium and the insurance company will cover part or all of the cost for vision care. Vision coverage is available in two basic types of plans:

- Vision benefits plan—This type of plan is regular insurance coverage. Depending on the specific plan, coverage may differ between in and out-of-network eye doctors. You will typically pay a portion of your eye care cost through a deductible and coinsurance or co-payments.
- Discount vision plan—With this option you can choose to reduce vision costs without regular insurance coverage. You pay for all your vision care, but at a reduced rate.

Why Should I Have Vision Insurance?

A visit with your eye doctor can determine whether you need corrective lenses and, if so, the correct prescription. Other eye concerns that will be addressed in an eye exam include checking for conditions or diseases such as glaucoma and cataracts, which can lead to vision loss.

Regular eye exams can also identify overall health concerns, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and risk of heart disease or stroke before you are even aware of any symptoms. You can then follow up with a medical doctor, minimizing the effects of these conditions on your health and finances.

What Is Covered Under Vision Insurance?

Vision insurance generally provides coverage for basic care and eye wear. Most vision plans will cover the following services:

- Annual or biannual eye exams, including dilation
- Eyeglass frames
- Eyeglass lenses
- Contact lenses

How Does Vision Insurance Work?

For vision coverage, you pay a premium or membership fee. Then, when you visit your eye doctor or purchase corrective lenses, you pay a reduced amount for

services. Eye exams will typically be covered at 100 percent or have a small copay.

Corrective lenses are usually covered with a copay or a maximum allotted amount per year. If you are given an allotted amount, you would only have to pay if the eye wear exceeds that amount. For example, if your insurance covers eyeglass frames up to \$120 and the frames cost \$160, you would only have to pay the additional \$40. Other services, such as eye surgery or treatment for eye diseases, are usually covered at a reduced rate.

Most plans will place limits on their coverage for eye wear. For example, a plan might cover a new set of eyeglass lenses once a year, eyeglass frames once every two years and contact lenses once a year. Many plans will further limit coverage to either eyeglasses or contact lenses during a plan year. Plans vary, so make sure you read your benefit information carefully.